PRIVATE EYE

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DIANA MEMORIAL SOUVENIR ISSUE

A NATION MOURNS AGAIN

THIS IS AN ADVERTISEMENT

The Washington Times

DISTRICT HOME EDITION

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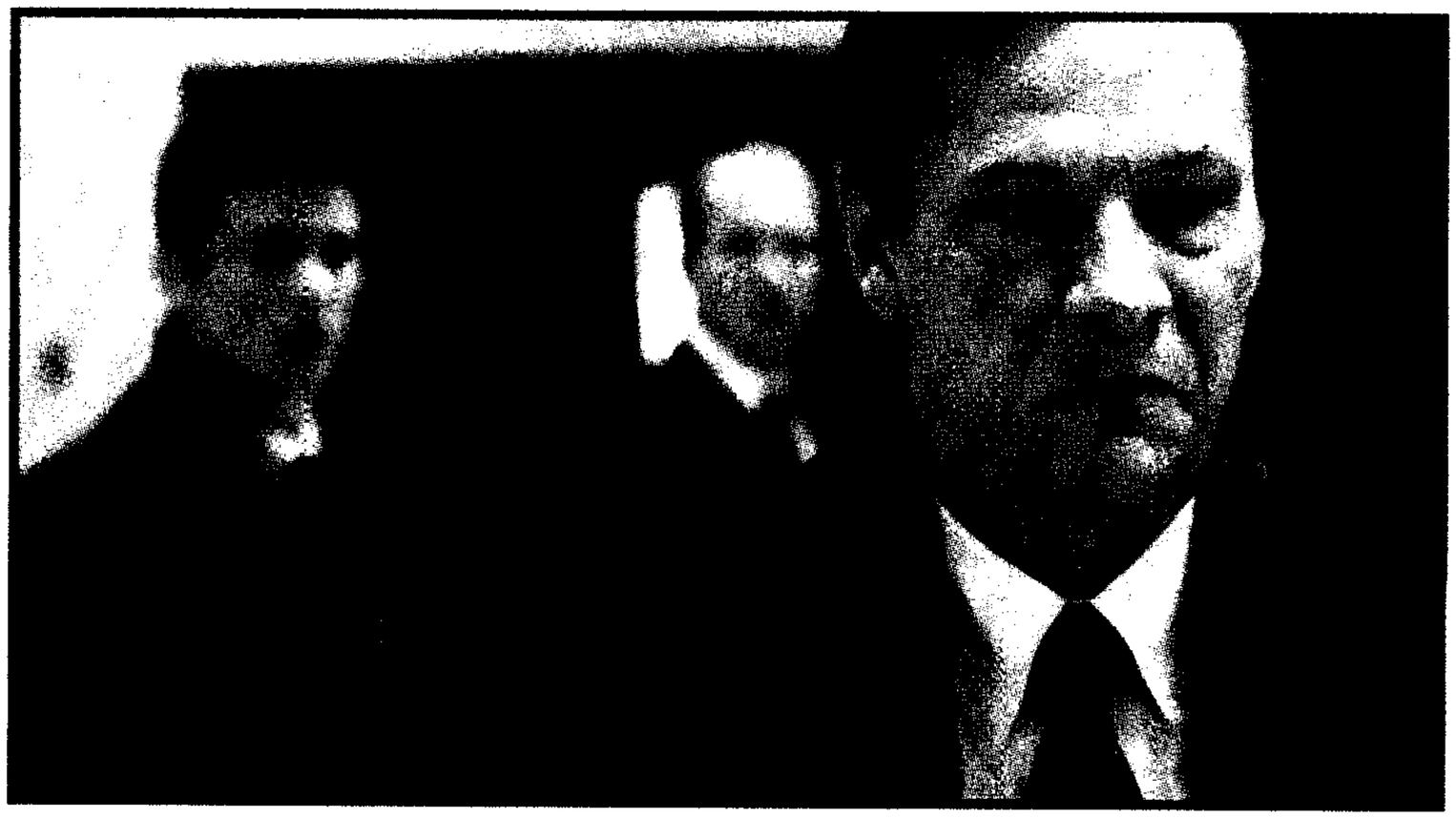
FBI Agent Convicted of Selling Secrets to the SU



How Do You Protect A Country When The Enemy Lies Within?

American FBI agent, Robert Philip Hanssen has been found guilty of engaging in spy activities for the Soviet Union and Russia against the US for a period of at least 15 years. He will face life imprisonment at the Supermax Federal Penitentiary in Florence, Colorado.

Hanssen was transferred to the Washington DC counterintelligence unit in 1981 and moved to the suburb of Vienna, Virginia. Hanssen told investigators that he began spying in 1984, when he informed the Soviets that a member of the GRU (Russian military intelligence agency) was selling secrets to the US.

In 1985, he sold to the Soviets the names of three KGB agents in the United States secretly working for the FBI. They were soon recalled to Russia; two were executed and another was imprisoned.

Hanssen's wife, Bonnie revealed her shocking discovery of his secret life.

"I caught him writing a secret letter and my immediate thoughts were that it was to another woman. When confronting him about it, he confessed that he had sold some worthless facts to the Soviets for $20,000".

Hanssen was arrested on February 18, 2001, at Foxstone Park near his home in Vienna, Virginia, charged with selling American secrets to Moscow for more than $1.4 million in cash and diamonds over a 15-year period. On July 6, 2001, he pleaded guilty to 15 counts of espionage. His activities have been described as "the worst intelligence disaster in US history".

The Story of The Lies That Never Stopped

Louis J. Freeh
New York

"A betrayal of trust by an FBI Agent–who is not only sworn to enforce the law, but specifically to help protect our nation's security–is particularly abhorrent.This kind of criminal conduct represents the most traitorous action imaginable against a country governed by the rule of law. It also strikes at the heart of everything the FBI represents: the commitment of over 28,000 honest and dedicated men and women who work diligently to earn the trust and confidence of the American people every day."

Former FBI Director Louis J. Freeh on the arrest of Robert Hanssen

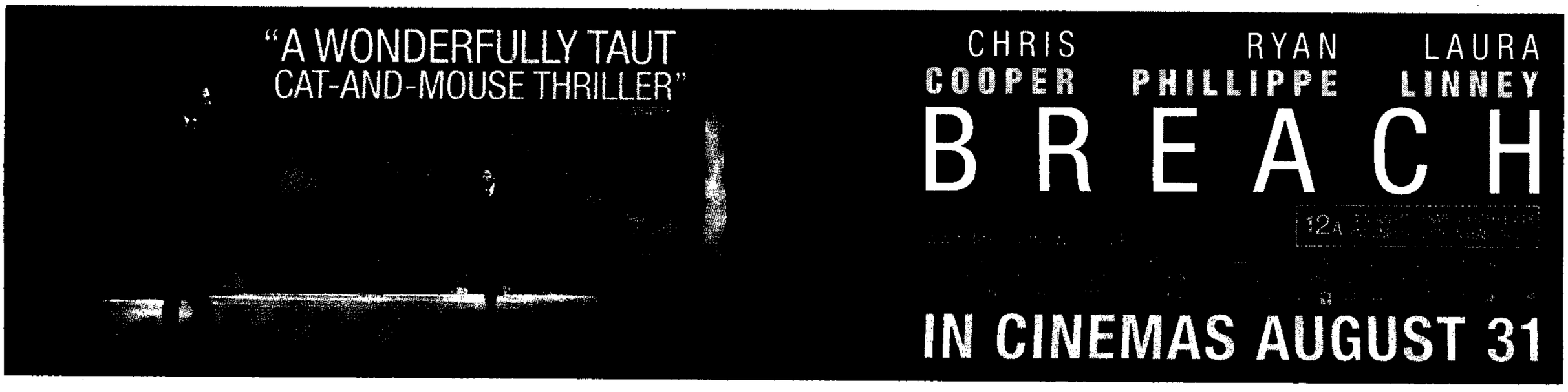
Game of Spy vs Spy

It was due to the heroic efforts of Eric O'Neill, a young FBI employee who was assigned to watch Hanssen that he was finally apprehended. O'Neill was able to conduct his investigation using the position of Hanssen's clerk as a cover.

"My superiors led me to believe I was investigating Hanssen's sexual habits. However, after several weeks, I found him to be a loving father and devout Catholic. As my respect for him grew, I started to question the case. This is when they informed me of its significance".

Although he admitted the case put much strain on his personal life, his wife finding Hanssen's behavior "intrusive", with his newly gained motivation and Hanssen's trust intact. O'Neill was able to locate crucial evidence.

"I ascertained that Hanssen was using a Personal Digital Assistant to store his information. When I was able to obtain this PDA briefly and have agents download and decode its encrypted contents, the FBI had its smoking gun".



THE turmoil in world financial markets provoked by the US subprime lending crisis is a wonderful example of how modern-day finance capitalism works – and of how little has changed.

Had investors around the world been asked if they would like to buy portfolios of loans made to low-income Americans with bad credit histories and houses in neighbourhoods somewhat less desirable than Beverly Hills, their response in any language would have been: "Get outta here".

But that's not how the loans were dressed up and sold. Instead, investors were offered clever-sounding products that promised big returns and appealed irresistibly to investors' old fashioned sense of… greed.

● *How subprime selling works: see* In The City, *p29,30*

David Cameron has put party workers on alert for a snap October election and made the breakdown of British society a key plank in the Tory platform.

Independent

Advertisement

£8m ■ Incredible price of Blair's Memoirs

£6* ■ Incredible price of 'So Long, Vicar' – last ever St Albion Parish News from Rev. Blair

*£5.99 actually... and these are more reliable, Ed. See page 35

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ABC

"Have you tried switching it off and on again?"

THE BBC's coverage of Tory MP John Redwood's Competitiveness Commission Report forced Helen Boaden, Auntie's director of news, to issue an apology on her blog.

Well, a partial apology: she denied a suggestion from the Conservative blogger Iain Dale that the BBC had started all its news bulletins with the words: "The Labour party has today criticised…" by giving a list of examples to demolish his apparently flimsy case.

On closer inspection, however, every example she picked *did* contain Labour criticism within the first 20 seconds. For example:

BBC One/News 24, 6am: "...Labour says it's evidence the right had regained control of the Tory agenda..."

Radio 4, 8am: "...Labour says it's evidence the right has regained control of the Tory agenda..."

Radio 2, 11am: "...Labour says it's evidence those on the right are back in control of the Tory agenda..."

BBC News website: "...Labour claims the proposals show the party is lurching back to the right in the face of disappointing polls..."

Five Live, 11am: "...Labour has condemned the latest review of policy carried out by the Conservatives as a lurch back to the right wing of politics..."

Of course, in the interests of balance and impartiality, all this was broadcast a full week before the bulk of Redwood's report was released to the press.

● *More TV and media news, p8*

JUST FANCY THAT!

"A HOST of blue-chip companies have altered their entries on Wikipedia," the *Times* reported airily on 16 August, "in an attempt to cover up embarrassing episodes."

Quite so. But after naming and shaming such giants as Wal-Mart, Disney, Sony and Exxon, the paper had no space to mention the revision of another high-profile Wikipedia entry: that of Wendi Deng, wife of *Times* owner Rupert Murdoch.

This was clearly an oversight as Mrs Dirty Digger's entry was the subject of frantic revisions a few weeks back when *Fortune* hack Eric Ellis wrote a 10,000-word profile of her for an Australian magazine. An anonymous contributor operating from the IP address 206.15.98.236 seemed particularly keen to minimise any embarrassment for Mrs Digger, deleting sections of the Wikipedia entry which referred to Ellis's piece as a "well-researched" exposé "that Deng herself and Murdoch have been making every effort to suppress".

A quick search discloses that 206.15.98.236 is in fact the IP address of one Jason Ripkey – an IT coordinator at the New York headquarters of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation!

● *More Wikipedia Whispers, plus Daily Mail house price madness, p4*

EYE TOLD YOU SO

GOOD to see Mr Justice Collins agreeing with the *Eye* (see 1179) that deporting failed asylum seekers back to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), pending the upcoming "country guidance" case, is "playing with people's lives".

Sadly, the ruling preventing further removals until a decision on whether it is safe to send people back to the DRC comes too late for many, including the Ndombasi family who were removed from their home in Bolton in July.

Friends of the family say that Lufu Ndombasi has been detained by the DRC authorities and his wife and 13-year-old son are now in hiding.

● *Don't-care care homes; nuclear waste, paediatrics in peril:* In the Back, *p26-28*

JUST over a fortnight ago it was reported that Douglas Alexander, Labour minister and general election co-ordinator, had called on several ad agencies to pitch for his party's account.

This was seen as definite proof that Labour was preparing to move into campaign mode, and commentators wondered if a general election could be far away.

In fact the aftermath has been rather more intriguing. For it is widely rumoured in adland that of the four agencies Alexander approached, three passed on the opportunity to get involved.

When Tony Blair was at the helm, the Labour account was greatly prized and keenly guarded by TBWA. Post-Vicar, it looks as if Gordon Brown's great adventure is seen as… just a little bit boring.

● *More Ad Nauseam, p25*

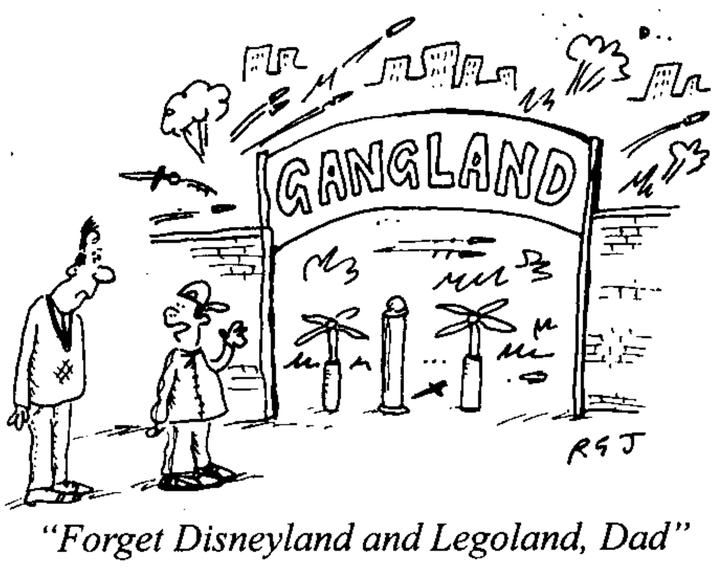
"He's being bullied at school because he hasn't murdered anyone"

GREAT news for Jeffrey Archer fans: the old lag has just finished his new novel, *A Prisoner of Birth*, which will appear next March.

As Jeffrey reveals on his blog: "This is the story of a man who is sent to prison for 22 years for a murder he did not commit – he escapes and seeks revenge on the four people who put him there."

When Archer emerged from jail in 2003, it was widely reported that he too was seeking revenge. But any resemblance between his fictional quartet of rogues and Ted Francis, Angie Peppiatt, Mr Justice Potts and Baroness Nicholson – the people Jeffrey blames for his woes – will of course be entirely coincidental.

● *More Books & Bookmen, p24, 25*



"Forget Disneyland and Legoland, Dad"

Street Of Shame

"VERY few people doubt that the BBC has 'institutional bias' when it comes to discussing the invasion of Iraq," David Blunkett writes in his *Sun* column. "But what about other topics? How about an issue close to my heart – the introduction of ID cards and the development of a database to stop others stealing our identity... ?"

Beardie's harrumphing has been provoked by a Radio 4 programme on ID cards, full of "misleading propaganda" about the drawbacks and problems. "If the Beeb are impartial, I look forward to a programme extolling the virtues of the scheme."

As well he might, for it is even closer to Blunkett's heart than he lets on. Not only was he its architect and champion at the Home Office; since March he has chaired the international advisory committee of Entrust, a Texas-based security company which has formally registered an interest in bidding to run the British ID card programme.

Alas, in a fit of silly-season doziness, Beardie quite forgets to mention this fact to his readers.

"AS ONE charity last week warned thousands of gap-year travellers that their volunteer holidays may be spurious and badly planned, further evidence has emerged of placement agencies charging high fees from travellers wishing to work in the developing world," reported the *Sunday Times* on 19 August.

"Kate Hardyment applied directly to the Ghanian work-camp project Volu, paying £135 for her four-week stay. On arrival, she found other volunteers had paid UK-based agencies up to £1,000 for identical placements – a mark-up of 600 percent."

Shocking! Those in fresh possession of their A-level results would do far better to go for one of the "exotic ways to reward yourself" recommended in the *Sunday Times* travel section one week previously – such as, er, "Teaching and Building in Ghana," at a price of "£800 (two weeks) to £1,250 (five weeks)."

IN THE olden days desperate Fleet Street diarists used to drop unsubtle hints in their copy to "out" privately gay celebrities. But Peter McKay, aka Ephraim Hardcastle of the *Daily Mail*, is going one better. The sniggering McHackey seems determined to "in" every openly gay celebrity in the world.

"Philip Hensher is a former House of Commons clerk with a PhD in 18th century satire and a confirmed bachelor," he snorted on 21 August, just weeks after pointing out that – shock, horror – "historian David Starkey, 62, is unmarried".

Other "confirmed bachelors" and "never married" figures smirkingly fingered in the Hardcastle column over the past 12 months include designers Stefano Gabbana and Karl Lagerfeld, Nicky Haslam, Peter Mandelson, W.H. Auden, and, shockingly, most of the audience watching pop star Will Young appear in a play by Noel Coward.

What *must* their mothers think?

HACKWATCH

Raising The Roof

"LIKE a cuckoo heralding spring, the Greater British House Bore is back," Allison Pearson wrote in the *Daily Mail* on 14 March this year, complaining of people who talk incessantly about house-prices.

"Generating envy and desire, property has always been the perfect middleclass pornography... Beware the Greater British House Bore! It's all very well owning your dream home, but not if that house owns your soul."

Was she by any chance referring to her own newspaper? The *Mail* may be obsessed with house prices, but its coverage certainly isn't boring: it's a nerve-shredding white-water ride. On 30 January, for instance, readers were informed: "HOUSE PRICES BOOM AGAIN." They barely had time to crack open the Babycham before a headline the very next day warned: "Debt fears end housing boom." And, as subsequent *Mail* headlines suggest, Pearson's rebuke has done nothing to stem the inky torrent:

"Housing market 'hits the buffers'." (17/3/07)

"Boom that won't bust: House prices are rising at their fastest rate for four years despite loan hikes." (26/3)

"Double whammy could send house prices plunging." (3/4)

"The property pots of gold: Rising house prices leave families with a fortune in bricks and mortar." (4/4)

"No end in sight for boom time in house prices." (6/4)

"Is the property boom finally reaching its end?" (12/4)

"House prices 'set to crash by 30pc'" (16/4)

"House prices soar by four times the rate of inflation." (17/4)

"Property market 'to crash in 12 months'." (30/5)

"HOUSE PRICE BOOM OVER?" (31/5)

"House prices 'will soar to ten times salaries'." (8/6)

"House prices are rising at fastest rate for two years." (29/6)

"Economist warns of house price collapse." (14/7)

"Prices racing ahead in housing shortage." (20/7)

"House price rises 'will grind to a halt' as interest rates bite." (23/7)

"Property market in peril with houses overvalued by 20pc." (31/7)

"Property prices 'to soar 40pc by 2012'." (6/8)

"Numbers that prove our property boom has bust." (11/8)

"House prices soar by 15pc." (14/8)

"Students send the price of property soaring." (17/8)

"With even London prices falling, could this be the end of the homes boom?" (20/8)

Which begs another question: if the boom does end, what on earth will the *Mail* find to write about?

THE morning after the murder of 11-year-old Rhys Jones in Liverpool, the *Daily Mail*'s website carried shocking details of the neighbourhood's "Croxteth Crew" and the "Strand Crew of Norris Green" – in the paper's words, "the rival gun gangs who flaunt their weapons on the internet".

"Chilling shots – available to anyone who logs on to the website YouTube – show how they terrorise the neighbourhood on quad-bikes, ride wheelies on motorbikes and perform handbrake turns on busy roads in their high-performance cars," the paper noted.

And indeed they do. But not in one of the videos hosted on the *Mail*'s own website, which instead depicted a masked youth claiming to be one of the "Nogga Dogz" playing with a Scooby Doo toy, feeding his cat, polishing his shoes, making beans on toast and demonstrating the correct use of "The Weaponz", which included an egg whisk, chopsticks, a spatula and a walking stick.

WIKIPEDIA WHISPERS

MYSTERY still surrounds the identity of the Rothermere lackey who used an Associated Newspapers computer on 5 June to amend the not entirely flattering entry for *Daily Mail* columnist Amanda Platell.

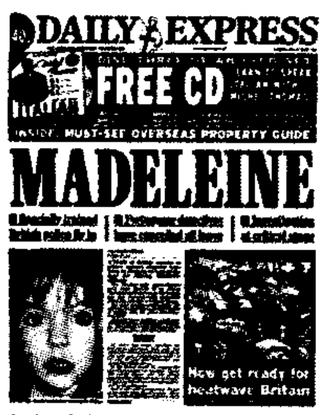
Whoever it was removed the verifiable facts that Platell is "unmarried and childless" and "an immigrant, being Australian", and that, like "her former master Piers Morgan", she displays "an inability to identify with the humanity of the readership". Whatever can they mean?

An unknown hand also noted the impending nuptials of *Mail* agony aunt Bel Mooney, at the same time amending several biographical details of members of her former husband Jonathan Dimbleby's family.

At the *Times*, a while back, someone used a News International computer to remove a line from diarist Hugo Rifkind's Wikipedia entry stating that "he generally writes rude, uninteresting comments about students".

And which Wapping worker removed a paragraph in the entry for *Sun* columnist Victoria Newton, pointing out that she "frequently makes an appearance in *Private Eye*'s 'Street of Shame'" and includes "many mistakes in her column from basic facts to downright lies"? Helpfully the anonymous scribe also deleted a list of internet-linked examples of her cock-ups.

More amusingly, another News International employee felt the need to alter the entry for the company's own *thelondonpaper* on 18 July so that all references to its hated rival, *London Lite,* read "London Shite".



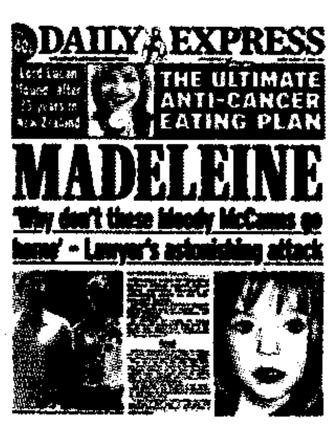
July 31 2007

DAILY EXPRESS
FREE CD
LEARN TO SPEAK ITALIAN
MADELEINE
Dramatic breakthrough in search as kidnapped girl is spotted in Belgium
August 3

August 6

August 8

August 9

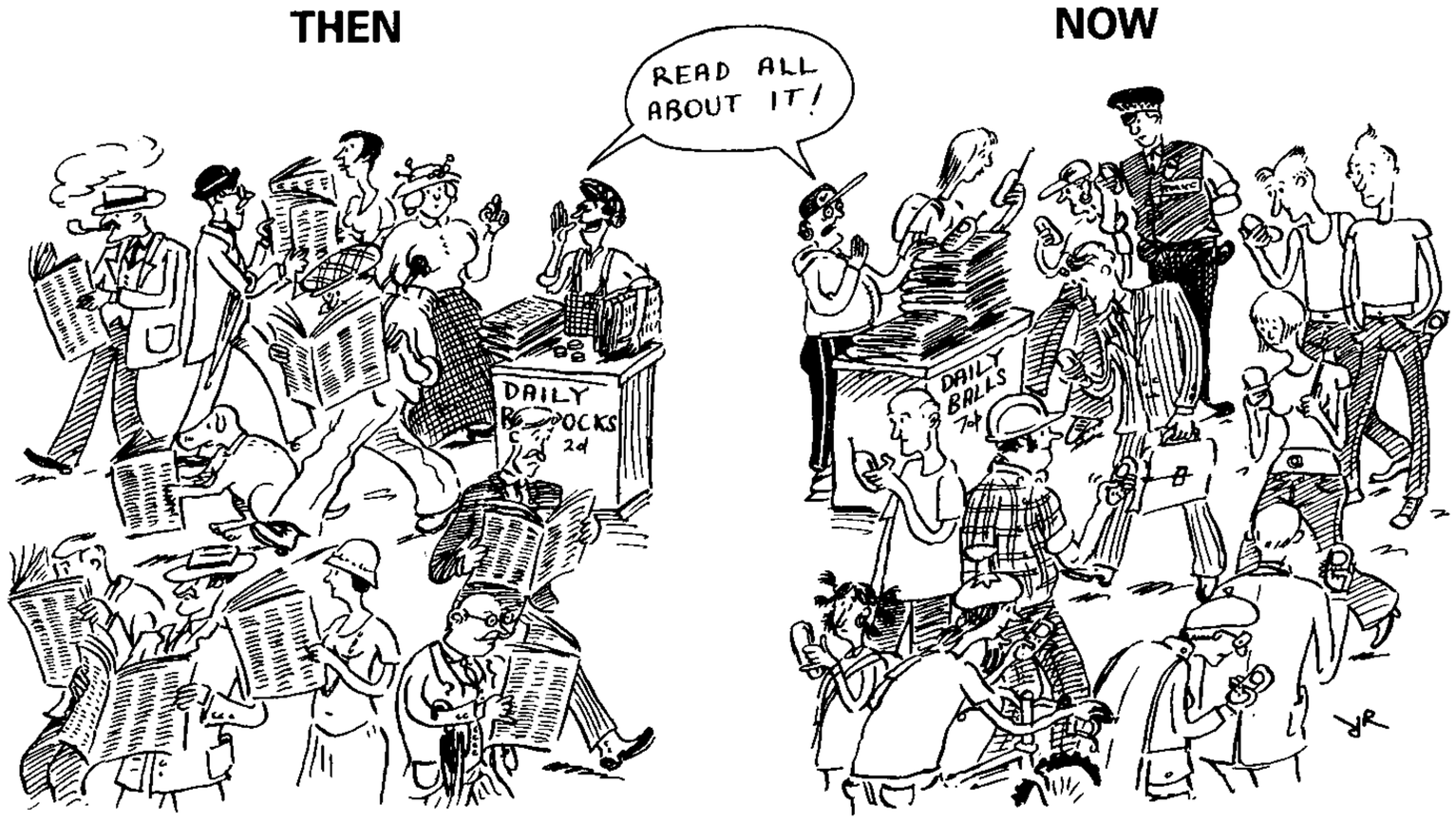


August 10

August 11

THEN

NOW



***GUARDIAN* hacks preening at finding one of their own depicted in Hollywood blockbuster *The Bourne Ultimatum* – Paddy Considine plays an investigative hack and scenes were filmed at the paper's real-life offices, a fact the paper has mentioned a mere 15 times during the past month – were disgruntled to discover that other publications did not share their enthusiasm.**

"Most ignore this crucial part of the plot," noted diarist Duncan Campbell in a review of reviews on 22 August. "Envy is such an unbecoming emotion."

Most? Polly Graham in the *News of the World* approved of "a bit of comedy with a wishy-washy *Guardian* journalist". In the *People*, Richard Bacon wondered how, given his employer, he didn't write "articles about whether to make your children organic". The *Times* mused on how little the "young, dashing Paddy Considine" resembled the paper's real-life security correspondent, Richard Norton-Taylor. The *Financial Times* applauded the shooting of "the odd Guardian journalist", suggesting that "given that he fails to notice a passer-by dumping an alien mobile phone *in his pocket* and panics at the sight of a litter-collector, *he may have made an unwise career choice*"; while the *Sunday Express* remarked on the character's breakdown in the face of danger by noting "well, he does work for the Guardian."

In the *Sunday Times* Cosmo Landesman scoffed at the idea that "Bourne has undergone one of the most bizarre transformations we've seen in any character; from CIA assassin, a perfect killing machine, he has ended up a Guardian-reading liberal… the John Rambo of the liberal intelligentsia". And the *Daily Mail* asked rhetorically: "Why is the *Guardian* shamelessly plugging an ultraviolent American thriller?" before pointing out that "colleagues say real-life editor Alan Rusbridger would have liked to play himself 'but felt he wasn't quite handsome enough'."

"*KNOCKED Up* is the best film of the summer" proclaimed the "flannel panel" on the front page of the *Guardian*, directing readers toward the most vital article in the entire paper, Peter Bradshaw's review of the slacker comedy which opened in cinemas that day.

Naturally the paper's enthusiasm had nothing to do with the vast four-page wraparound cover the film's promoters had sponsored at enormous expense for the *Guardian*'s Film and Music supplement.

A WORCESTER restaurateur has refused to display a non-smoking sign in his brassiere despite being handed a £200 fine by the council.

Worcester News

ENGLAND cricketer Matthew Hoggard takes a dim view of the tabloids, as he told an *Observer* hack who went to see him the other day. But what about upmarket papers such as the *Times*?

"Well," he concurred, "there's a lot of shite in the *Times*."

Oh dear. Distracted by his injuries, poor Hoggy seems to have forgotten that he himself earns a handsome stipend writing a cricket column for… the *Times*!

HEATHROW EXCESS

THE "Camp for Climate Action" near Heathrow was perfectly timed – not because it fell during the peak holiday period when 1.5m passengers were expected to pass through the airport, but because it coincided with the height of the newspaper silly season when the most paranoid and fact-free of hacks' ramblings are guaranteed free rein.

2 August: The *Times* has chilling news of one of what it calls "the antics envisaged… a sitdown protest which might block airport entrances and exits."

7 Aug: "Heathrow travellers will face massive disruption," warns the *Express*. "There were reports that campaigners planned to break into the airport, cause havoc in terminals and block roads and railways leading to Heathrow."

11 Aug: "It is feared that up to 3,000 protesters will descend on the airport, making the situation unbearable," frets the *Telegraph*. "Airport owners BAA are taking steps to secure the airport following intelligence reports that well-organised 'affinity groups' plan to break through the perimeter."

12 Aug: Julia Hartley Brewer rolls out her crystal ball in the *Sunday Express*: "Joss Garman… the irritatingly smug co-founder of anti-aviation campaign group Plane Stupid… when he gets arrested for storming the runway at Heathrow (as he inevitably will), will call his mummy."

13 Aug: "The organisers of a week-long Camp for Climate Action are hell-bent on bringing Heathrow to a halt in 'mass direct action' that could cost tens of millions of pounds," shrieks the *Mirror*. "BAA expects demonstrators to pose as passengers to infiltrate the four terminals where it is feared they will set up fake ticket booths so innocent travellers miss flights. Police are bracing themselves for 'life-threatening acts' such as climbing perimeter fences, blocking runways and disrupting nearby roads, including the M25. Protesters are also expected to try to storm and occupy offices."

For now, however, a mere 150 people have turned up at the camp. But be very afraid. "More than 150,000 activists from across Europe will join them at the Imperial College sports ground, between the villages of Sipson and Harlington, tomorrow," the *Daily Mail* warns. By the third edition, this has been revised to "more than 1,500."

14 Aug: "Anarchy at Heathrow", screams the *Express*, perhaps inspired by the fact that so far "a 33-year-old man was held on suspicion of possessing a fraudulent train ticket and released without charge." There's more to come though – "'Bomb' Raids by Eco Nuts", according to the *Sun*. "It is believed activists will plant hoax suspect packages, causing misery for passengers as terror cops seal off busy terminals."

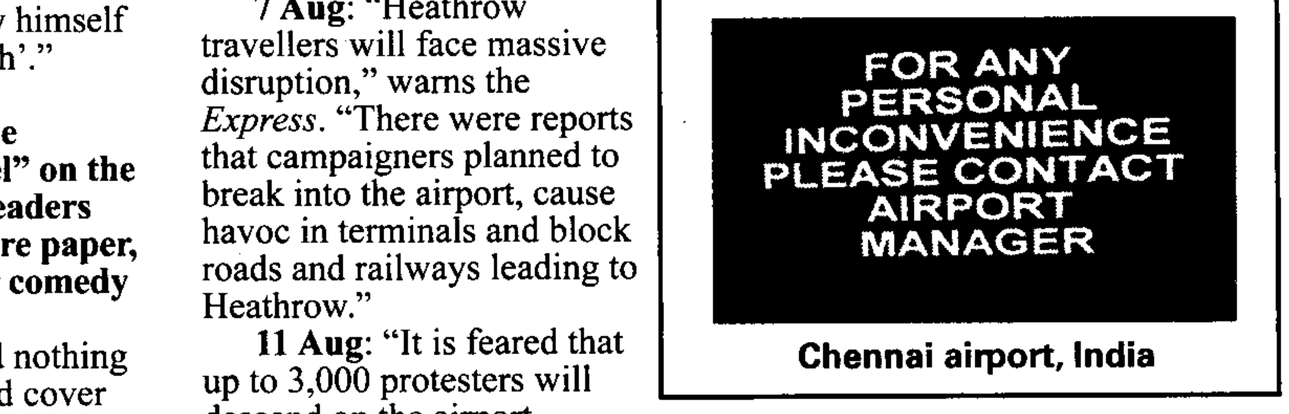
15 Aug: "Are militants plotting to infiltrate Heathrow dressed as air crews?" asks the *Mail*. Readers are left to supply their own answer.

18 Aug: With just 24 hours to go, it's time to adopt the brace position. "A group that has infiltrated the climate camp at Heathrow claimed yesterday it can disrupt communications between the control tower and aircraft," frets the *Telegraph*. "The group also discussed the possibility of pouring diesel on to the runways to cause damage."

19 Aug: They're here! "An undercover investigation by the *Sunday Times* revealed a scheme to invade Heathrow's main runway today and stop flights… Hundreds were given training last week at the camp for climate action on how to cut through fences and tunnel under security barriers."

20 Aug: Police report some "minor scuffles" as an estimated 1,000 protesters take part in separate demonstrations at the proposed site of a new runway, BAA headquarters, a BA cargo depot, a power station and offices in London and Oxford. No one trespasses on runways or terminals at Heathrow, and flights and passengers are completely unaffected.

21 Aug: "Mayhem as activists end Heathrow vigil," the *Express* sums up not entirely accurately.



Chennai airport, India

DAILY EXPRESS
COULD BRITAIN BE HEADING FOR A NEW GREAT DEPRESSION?
MADELEINE
New British 'suspect' insists: I am innocent
Yes, we've won a wee bit of money £35,425,411.80p
DRAMATIC NEW DEVELOPMENT
MADELEINE
Police: We know who killed her
STOCK MARKET CRISIS
DIANA: Why won't the Queen fly the flag at half-mast?
MADELEINE
WE ARE JUST HOURS FROM THE SOLUTION
DIANA
FURY AS HER FUND GIVES MILLIONS TO REFUGEES
FREE BEAUTY TREATMENT AND SPA DAYS
MADELEINE
British suspect to be arrested in hours say police
BRITISH SUMMER
Wet, cold and killer jellyfish
MADELEINE
NOW POLICE TELL PARENTS: DON'T LEAVE PORTUGAL
Diana was nine weeks pregnant when she died
'WE'VE LET MADELEINE DOWN'
A boy of 11 shot dead...just what has gone wrong with our country?
MADELEINE
MUM'S FURY AT 'YOU KILLED HER' SLUR

August 14 | August 16 | August 17 | August 20 | August 22 | August 23 | August 24

CON-SULTANTS

WHEN MPs on the education select committee expressed serious doubts in August over the £45bn Building Schools for the Future programme (which is mired in impossibly complex "local education partnership" PFI deals), one of their demands was that it be carefully monitored.

And who better to keep a close eye as the billions flow out of education budgets into the hands of PFI builders, bankers and consultants than… PFI consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers!

PwC was brought in last year to assess the initiative's impact on educational achievement under a three-year contract that, according to schools minister Jim Knight, may be extended "to support a longitudinal evaluation of the longer term impact" (*eh?*)

The government is keen to keep PwC's obvious conflict of interest quiet. Earlier this year Knight insisted in Parliament that "PwC has no role in delivering the BSF programme". *Whoops!* The firm was retained by Westminster council as an adviser on its BSF bid.

No doubt PwC's assessment of the programme will reach the same broadly supportive conclusions that its "independent" review of city academies did two years ago. Though the schools into which extra millions were ploughed might be expected to improve, the findings were disputed by local authorities and, of course, avoided the question of whether the billions might have achieved more if spent on other schools.

PwC's influence continues a long tradition of telling the government how to spend taxpayers' money. In 2001 it stepped in to endorse the PFI after the government's favoured study on the subject, by a certain Arthur Anderson, was undermined by that firm's demise. The only time Tony Blair was ever questioned on PFI, he cited the PwC report in defence.

Then, as now with the government's two flagship education investment policies, many millions in consultancy fees duly found their way into the pockets of the ever-amenable PwC.

RUBBISH STUNT

WELL DONE Lib Dem MP Saj Karim for demonstrating his green credentials by posing for the cameras while recycling plastic fizzy drinks bottles.

Shame the bottle bank in the picture was for glass recycling. Zooming in, the picture on his website shows the instruction: "Clear bottles and jars only please". *Whoops!*

Karim can also be found posing with low energy lightbulbs, but the latest blog entry from his summer hols reveals he's been taking a break from preaching energy efficiency... skiing in Dubai's indoor snowdome!

GORDON'S GLOBAL CHALLENGE

WHO exactly is David Kilcullen, the US State Department adviser whose thoughts on beating global terrorism have struck such a chord with Gordon Brown?

The last *Eye* noted how Brown's search for a foreign policy he can call his own has led him to the work of Frances Stonor Saunders and her study of Cold War propaganda methods, *Who Paid the Piper*? But Brown seems equally impressed by Kilcullen, a man who recommends "Vietnam War methods" to win the day in Iraq and elsewhere.

Something of a "warrior intellectual", the Australian Kilcullen has been seconded to advise the US military leader in Iraq, General David Petraeus. A lieutenant colonel with a PhD, he previously worked as a counter terrorism official and an adviser to Paul Wolfowitz at the US Pentagon.

Kilcullen is certainly clever, if not a little pretentious. His most extensive paper on anti-terrorist strategy, published in *Small Wars Journal*, claimed that: "Insurgencies are non-equilibrium, dissipative structures." Got that?

Brown has reportedly said he is drawn to Kilcullen because he proposes a strategy that includes hearts-and-minds initiatives and not just simple force. While an intelligent strategy that goes beyond military force in Iraq has its attractions, Kilcullen's enthusiasm for the Vietnam War is perhaps more worrying. In his 2004 paper outlining a global counter-insurgency strategy he said: "Somewhat counter-intuitively, Vietnam War methods appear to address the full spread of attack methods." He appears to believe that "counter-insurgency in Vietnam was highly effective" and that America's defeat was ultimately due to "a loss of political will, resulting from casualties sustained in the earlier phases of the war", rather than the strategies themselves.

Most alarmingly Kilcullen calls for a "global 'Phoenix programme'" to deal with insurgencies. Phoenix was a US plan to attack Viet Cong infrastructure in Vietnam: a multi-pronged scheme which included attempts to isolate fighters from their village support by relocating locals to armed settlements and introducing some "reconstruction". However, the heart of the programme, which Kilcullen describes positively, was the "neutralization" of the enemy through a CIA-led local paramilitary force which was responsible for thousands of assassinations and widespread torture, often against Vietnamese with no connection to the guerillas.

Kilcullen's argument today is that fighting both in Iraq and against al-Qaeda should follow a "counter-insurgency" rather than a "counter-terrorism" model. Though this may include "search and destroy" exercises, it also "demands extremely close coordination and integration between and within police, intelligence, military, development, aid, information and administrative agencies".

Whether the British prime minister opts for this kind of military-led social engineering, remains to be seen. As the Vietnam example shows, however, non-belligerent talk of "hearts and minds" propaganda, housing and aid are all very well, but the strategy can go very badly wrong.

CLOSER to home, meanwhile, Labour's once "ethical" foreign policy took a walloping when the Commons defence, foreign affairs, international development and trade and industry committees published a joint paper in August criticising the government for exporting arms to dodgy countries that are highlighted in the Foreign Office's own Human Rights Report.

Will anyone take any notice of the criticism? Don't hold your breath.

Among many examples cited, the MPs noted that "concerns have long been held over the links between the Colombian government and right-wing paramilitary forces within the country". But as they also noted, this has not stopped the UK government licensing the sale of handy items like heavy machine guns to Colombia.

But the government remains adamant that it is only involved in what Foreign Office minister Kim Howells calls "constructive engagement rather than uncritical support" as "co-operation with **Colombia** focuses on the fight against drugs and improving the difficult human rights situation".

But how good is Howells' own focus?

Back in January Lord Triesman – then himself a Foreign Office minister – welcomed the Colombian Foreign Secretary Maria Consuelo Araujo for a three-day visit to Britain. She won't be coming back. Just a month later Ms Araujo had to resign after being caught up in the so-called "parapolitica" scandal. Her brother and fellow Colombian minister Senator Alvaro Araujo was arrested when his details were found on the laptop of "Jorge 40", a known assassin for the right-wing paramilitaries.

SO. Farewell then to the Defence Export Services Organisation, the Ministry of Defence unit dedicated to flogging British weaponry abroad (*Eyes passim*).

The autumn's comprehensive spending review should see DESO consigned to history as Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced last month that "defence trade promotion" should be integrated with the rest of the government's trade support, while DESO's functions supporting UK defence would be "allocated elsewhere" at the MoD.

But before it goes, there was time for one last DESO symposium earlier this year. Campaign Against the Arms Trade has now received copies of the speeches, under Freedom of Information, revealing such gems as Iraq being described as "largely a market yet to emerge".

"We're like the US and the UK – we've got a special relationship"

BODGE THE BUILDER (CONT.)

HOW will we know if Gordon Brown is on target for his goal of building 3m new homes by 2020? The recent green paper on housing makes some big claims for the government's achievements so far, but getting the numbers right doesn't seem to be among them.

"The level of completions of new homes has increased by 30 percent since 2002 and is now at its highest level for 17 years," say the green paper's authors. In fact, the Department for Communities and Local Government's own figures, quoted as the source, put the improvement at half that. It seems Yvette Cooper's housing mandarins either cocked it up or made it up.

Moroccan chicken parcels are produced using Polish or Dutch chicken.

Sainsbury's

Down on the Farm

CONFUSION reigns in parts of the media about "set aside", the system introduced by Brussels in the 1990s to cut down the EU's notorious "grain mountain", by paying farmers not to grow crops on part of their land.

Since grain prices have doubled in the past two years due to the soaring world demand for grain, Brussels is now proposing to end set-aside altogether. This has prompted conservationists such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to sound the alarm over the disastrous effect such a move could have on wildlife, notably ground-nesting birds, which they claim have flourished on the land set-aside has released from the plough.

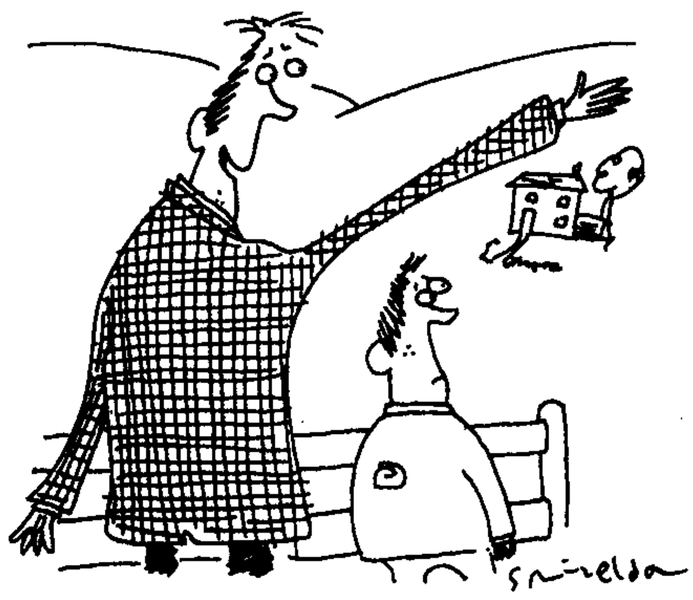
It is true that set-aside has had some beneficial effect on wildlife, although in its early years the EU's requirement that set-aside land had to be cut before the end of the nesting season had a devastating effect on species such as skylarks, fooled into nesting on apparently abandoned fields which were then laid waste by June mowing. But *should journalists* like the BBC's environment correspondent Sarah Mukherjee have fallen for the latest RSPB propaganda or has she missed various rather important points?

First, she seems to have confused set-aside proper with the "buffer strips" which farmers have recently been required by Brussels to leave unploughed round the edges of their fields to encourage wildlife. Environmentally welcome as these are, they will not be affected by ending set-aside. Rather more seriously, Ms Mukherjee seems not to have realised that although compulsory set-aside means that a farmer is not allowed to grow food-crops on set-aside land, he or she can still use it to grow industrial crops, such as the oilseed rape which turns much of our countryside a livid yellow in May before being turned into cattle food or fuel. This has become such an increasingly lucrative source of income that the amount of "set-aside" land left for skylarks to nest on has already been dramatically reduced.

The real environmental story, however, is the alarming new pressure being brought to bear on farmland by Brussels' decision that by 2020 ten percent of all transport fuel in the EU must be sourced from carbon-friendly biofuels, such as wheat. For the UK to meet its share of this target would require 14m tons of wheat a year, 3m tons more than we grow now. We would thus have to import 10m tons a year to meet our food needs at a time when soaring world demand will have pushed prices through the roof.

Even if we derive our biofuel from other crops, this would still take up more farmland than we currently have in production. The only alternative will be to import biofuel from abroad, from countries such as Indonesia, already destroying its rainforest on a colossal scale to make palm oil, leading, inter alia, to a massacre of orangutans. One can of course understand why BBC journalists, as keen supporters of measures to fight global warming, might be reluctant to draw the connection between EU biofuel targets and the killing of orangutans. But the price to be paid by wildlife in Britain's countryside is likely to be just as high. Much better to concentrate attention on the ending of set-aside and hope listeners don't realise how much of the real story they are not being told.

'Muckspreader'



"One day son, 60 percent of this will be yours"

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

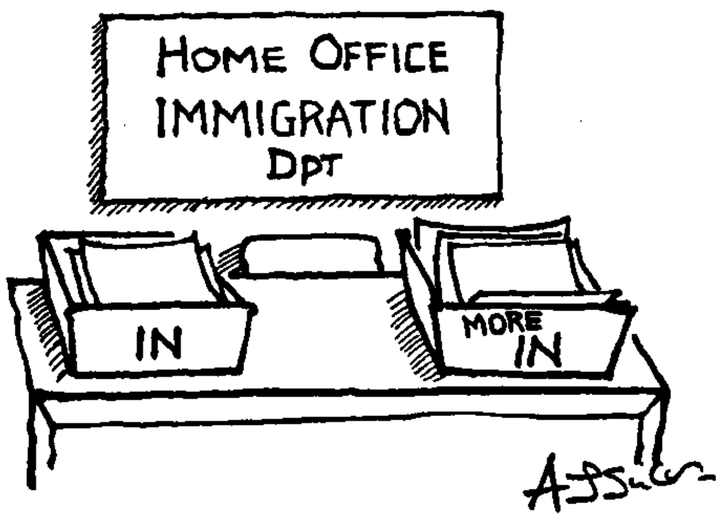
CONGRATULATIONS to EU employment commissioner Vladimir Spidla. With 2007 designated as the Year of Equal Opportunity, last month he demanded an improvement in women's career prospects and an end to the gender pay gap – currently 15 percent across the EU.

Alas, Spidla forgot to address the European Commission's own pisspoor performance in this area. Just eight of the EU's current 27 commissioners are women; and of the total 139 commissioners appointed since 1958, only 18 have been women. Not one became president.

The commission could blame member states: only the Scandinavian countries and new members from Eastern Europe have shown much interest in choosing female representatives. But the commission's own record on promoting women to top jobs is thoroughly embarrassing and all too reminiscent of the attitudes the Year of Equal Opportunity is supposed to highlight.

The commission's own figures show that only 16 percent of EU mandarins in the top three grades are women. Overall, less than 10 percent of all female Eurocrats have made it into the top five grades. But at the bottom of the pay scales women make up 2,459 of the lowest three grades compared with 1,224 men. *Quelle surprise*!

Commissioner Spidla declares that "women tend to bear the brunt [of family responsibilities] and this obviously has an effect on their career and on their wage levels". So what is Spidla doing about it apart from spouting a lot of hot air? He has five special advisers, all of whom are… men!



EU-phemisms

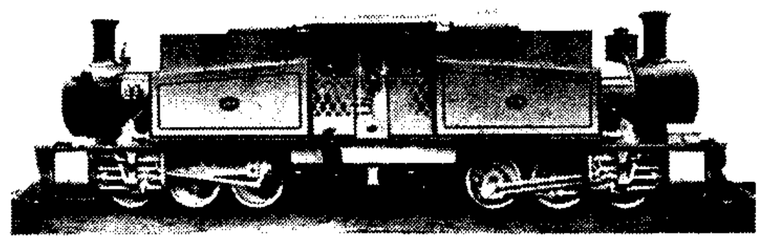
We're pissing your money up the wall

Number crunchings

£9m ■ International aid budget voted through by Scottish Executive to "help the world's poorest countries"

£7bn ■ Extra public funding Scotland receives every year from government in London

SIGNAL FAILURES



It's a fare cop out

HAVING failed to convince the public that fares aren't going to rocket to pay for the rail industry's inefficiency and profits (*Eye* 1190), the government is desperately pinning the blame for future rises on its chosen franchisees.

The latest east-coast mainline deal replaces GNER's new franchise, which hit the buffers because the £1.3bn premium GNER had to pay the government was too steep. The next franchise, awarded to National Express Group, includes a premium of, er, £1.4bn. NEG will hire "up to 40 more carriages". That's one way to bring in more cash; but the extra carriages will augment today's fleet only by "up to" 11 percent – and the government says annual premium payments will rise by 365 percent from 2008-9 to 2014-5 (excluding inflation).

So the government has effectively ordered whopping fare rises. It admitted regulated fares, including saver tickets, would continue rising by 1 percent above inflation "in line with national policy" (presumably not the same national policy as tackling climate change). It also said NEG had "indicated that they may wish to raise unregulated fares by an average of 2.1 percent above inflation each year". That leaves the door ajar for NEG to raise unregulated fares even more than that, if paying the premium and satisfying shareholders become a struggle. Either way the government can say it made no promises.

Such buck-passing is now systematic. This summer mandarins said Arriva had "indicated that they may wish to raise unregulated fares by an average of 3.4 percent above inflation each year" on CrossCountry trains; Stagecoach had "indicated they may wish to raise unregulated fares annually by an average of 3.4 percent above inflation" in the East Midlands; and Govia "is expected to increase fares for journeys on the London to Northampton route by 3 percent above inflation per annum". That's a lot of fare rises the government isn't responsible for.

MIDLANDS passengers are pleased the sun is setting on the painful era of Central Trains (owned by the same National Express Group that's soon to take over from GNER).

Central survived so long – more than three years after its franchise period expired – by being provincial: if it had covered London, the company's performance would have caused media outrage and NEG would have lost the franchise years ago or been obliged to improve it to the standards of NEG's c2c franchise (into London Fenchurch Street).

Since 1997 the *Eye* has covered Central, among other things, leaving holidaymakers behind when it ignored seasonal demand for extra carriages, and suspending services from timetables to hide the statistical impact of having too few drivers. There have been stories of Central's replacement buses, with novice drivers and no train staff on board, putting passengers through hell (eg an elderly Canadian woman told by a confused bus driver to travel from Staffordshire to Derby when she needed to go in the opposite direction to catch her plane at Manchester airport).

Central is upholding its standards to the finish. This month an *Eye* reader arrived at his local station in Lincolnshire to find the railway shut for engineering work and, yet again, a replacement bus with no guard (always present on the train) or other rail staff. The bus driver had never driven the route before and followed instructions to reverse up the station approach road – where the bus smashed into a lamppost. Passengers had to await a mechanic to do some engineering work on the damaged bus.

'Dr B Ching'

ITV

Undercover Mum (ITV)
Driving Me Crazy – with Jennie Bond (ITV)

ONCE, at the Edinburgh Telly Festival, a panel was asked to nominate the biggest threat to the future of the industry. An old ITV wiseacre went for a prolonged national electricity blackout, but he was wrong. The event most likely to bring British television to a halt would be a national newspaper strike.

TV feature-making is so heavily indebted to stories uncovered by print features pages that any reader enjoying in the *Mail*, *Mirror* or *Express* a piece about a have-a-go hero, tragic parent or scourge of jobsworths can confidently expect to be seeing the interviewee's lips moving on their screen a few months later.

ITV, for example, recently filled mid-week peak-time with two hours of programming that was no more than an animated version of those sections in the middle of the tabs called You or Life or Family.

In **Undercover Mum**, a former cop called Nina investigates issues of concern to families, drawing, we're told, on her police experience. It seems unlikely that down at New Scotland Yard they decide which crimes to take on by flicking through the *Daily Mail*, but that seemed to be the investigative technique underpinning this show.

One of the pieces of "evidence" flashed up on screen was a piece from the *Mail* health pages about the effects of additives on children. E-numbers was one of the "cases" Nina investigated in her opening show, the others being the origin of the meat in British pub chains and the practices of a Harley Street nutritionist.

The basic shtick in *Undercover Mum* is the pretence that Nina is in tremendous danger, as she takes a secret camera concealed in her handbag into the lairs of the various food villains she is trailing. There's a moment of high tension in a branch of JD Wetherspoon when one of the kids she's taken with her almost spills the beans to a waiter. But you don't need to be Sherlock Holmes to spot that Nina's procedural mistake is to drag so many kids with her on these, er, steak-outs. If she and a friend had simply used the cover story that she and a friend were having a sirloin supper, the survey could have been completed with no fuss. But the kids are there as a television trimming to cute things up.

Later, Nina breathlessly describes the tension she felt while filming secretly in the office of the nutritionist. But, again, he seemed an unlikely candidate to beat her up or kneecap her. At the very worst, he might prescribe her a new yoga programme.

The first show's big discovery – that the pubs were sourcing some of their meat from African cattle called zebu – got pre-transmission splashes in the middle-market tabs, thereby creating a perfect journalistic circle, in which what came out of those feature pages went back into them. The best thing about the programme was that its hysterical suspicion of commerce makes viewers question the adverts that pop up in the numerous breaks, but ITV probably wouldn't regard that as a good thing.

Incredibly, the programme was then followed by another hour of animated *Mail*, in the very unwisely titled **Driving Me Crazy with Jennie Bond**, in which the former BBC royal correspondent and jungle celebrity went after the Parking Nazis and other mad bureaucrats who are preventing an Englishman's car from being his castle.

As with its predecessor, the show had frequent rostrum-camera sequences of tabloid tales. If you distantly recalled seeing the headline "Hammer Gran, 81, Smashes Clampers" – about the old biddy who violently attacked the vehicle of the crew who put a Denver Boot on her car – here she now was again, to tell you about it in moving pictures.

The show was so desperate to tap into the anger of Middle England that the necessary sop to Ofcom, in which Bond had to distance the film from violence against enforcers of highway law, was notably grudging: "I guess she shouldn't have smashed up his van."

But, having dramatised this old tabloid cutting, the programme didn't have much of its own to bring to the party.

A vast chunk of screen-time was given to a mega-bore who goes round proving that councils have failed to follow their own guidelines on the painting of parking bays. The regulations dictate that the lines must be 600 mm apart. After a moment of high tension as he knelt with his ruler in the road, he declared: "Nearly right! But nearly's not good enough, is it?" Bond moved on to another obsessive who specialised in the illegal angling of speed cameras.

Apart from defining research as googling tabloid back-issues, both shows used the irritating device of interleaving three different investigations throughout the hour, so that, just when you thought you were going to find out what kind of meat was in the steaks or what happened with Sid from Beckenham's parking ticket, the film cut to another story for about quarter of an hour.

Borrowed from drama, this trick is supposed to keep the audience watching throughout an hour-long doc. But, to wait for an answer, you have to want to know what it is. With these shows, you'd be better off reading a paper. Like the producers did.

'Remote Controller'

LOW GRADE TV

ITV's zero-tolerance policy, announced by chairman Michael Grade last month, is unambiguous. If any production company "is found to have deceived or lied to viewers, we won't do business with them. Anyone who wants to make programmes for me should be aware that if you are caught deceiving the public it is one strike and you are out."

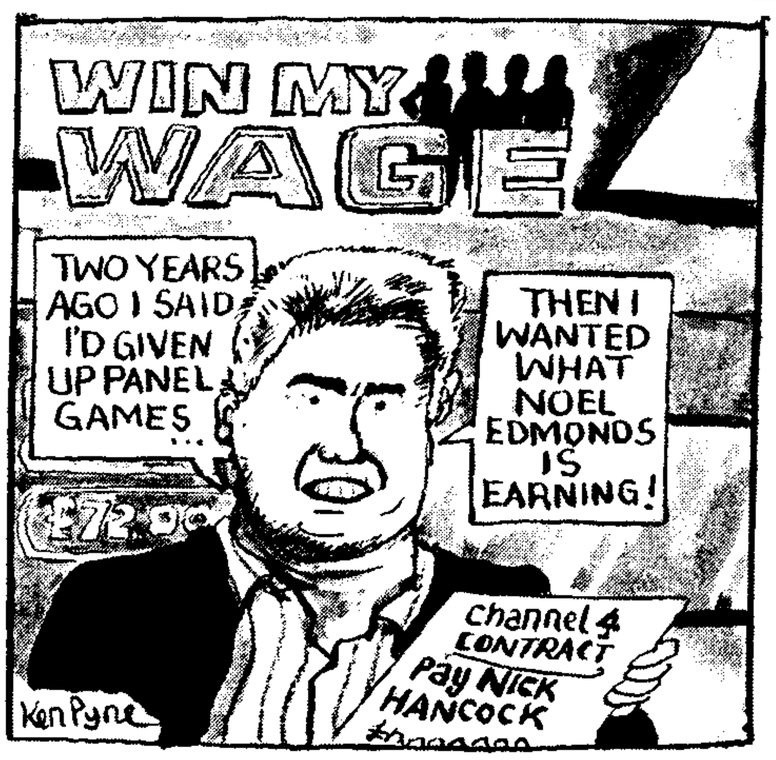
But did he mean it? If so, an obvious candidate for the chop is the firm that made *Quizmania*, one of many rip-off phone-quizzes pioneered last year by seedy satellite channel ITV Play (now deceased).

In January this year Ofcom censured ITV for airing a *Quizmania* in which viewers had to ring a top-rate phone number and guess "things you find in a woman's handbag". Since the supposedly "correct" answers included "Rawlplugs" and "balaclava", Ofcom concluded that the show was an outrageous con and breached the broadcasting code. The production company responsible for this scam was TalkbackThames. One strike and it's out? No chance. For TalkbackThames also produces *The Bill* and *The X-Factor*, and where would Grade's ratings be without *them*?

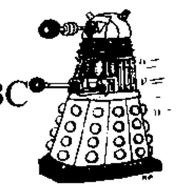
Meanwhile, in the wee small hours, other monsters lurk. Three nights a week, from midnight to 4am, ITV1 broadcasts *Make Your Play* – the notorious phone-quiz that was roundly condemned in March for challenging viewers to "add the pence: two pounds, 25p, £1.47, 16p, fifty pence". Thousands of drunks and insomniacs duly rang in (all charged at premium rates, even though most got no further than an answering machine) before the winsome presenter announced four hours later that no one had won – hardly surprising, since the official "solution" was 506, which made no sense at all. "The idea that you could have an answer that can't be arrived at is unacceptable," thundered John Whittingdale, chairman of the Commons culture committee."

Grade can hardly refuse to do business with the production company – *Make Your Play* is made in-house at ITV – but why does he let the show itself go on? For an answer, look no further than ITV's results for the first half of 2007, published three weeks ago, which revealed a slump in pre-tax profits from £173m to £105m and a £21m drop in revenue from phone-ins because of the GMTV scandals. *Make Your Play* may be a barrel-scrapingly cynical exercise whose sole *raison d'etre* is to empty viewers' wallets – but it's also dead cheap and therefore almost pure profit.

Announcing ITV's latest results, Grade denounced operators in the TV industry who have an "apparent and casual contempt towards viewers". How unlike his own high-minded corporation!


WIN MY WAGE
TWO YEARS AGO I SAID I'D GIVEN UP PANEL GAMES...
£72,000
THEN I WANTED WHAT NOEL EDMONDS IS EARNING!
Channel 4 CONTRACT
Pay NICK HANCOCK
Ken Pyne

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"SANJAY NAZERALI joins the BBC as Controller of Marketing, Communications & Audiences for the BBC's Global News Division in September. Sanjay will be responsible for leading the MC&A teams at BBC World Service, BBC World television, BBC Monitoring and the BBC's international facing online news services. He will be responsible for building a single brand platform across the Global News Division and developing the marketing communications strategy to ensure that each part of the division has maximum impact in a converging media environment. Richard Sambrook, the Director of BBC Global News, says, 'We created this pan-divisional post to enable us to communicate a unified and compelling Global News message around the world…'"

– Press release

If you require treatment as an impatient the nurse will inform the Bed manager and you will be found a suitable bed.

Information sheet
Stoke Mandeville Hospital

BIGGLES FLIES UNDONE

ACCORDING to a recent Ministry of Defence survey, "over 1,000 people in the MoD have a media/ communications job code". That's enough spin-doctors, then?

Apparently not, as the ministry is urging hacks and PR wallahs from Civvy Street to join the Royal Auxiliary Air Force's 7644 (VR) Public Relations Squadron – a group of plucky reservists who provide "media operational support to RAF and Nato forces". The squadron, based at Wendover in Buckinghamshire, is commanded by "Wing Commander Michael Cairns" – aka Mike Cairns, head of radio current affairs at BBC Northern Ireland, where staff refer to him as "Biggles".

Biggles's activities raise ticklish questions about editorial independence and impartiality for the BBC, given that he is currently supervising the flagship programme *Good Morning Ulster*, Radio Ulster's equivalent to *Today*, which often covers such topics as the British presence in Iraq. Wearing his wing commander's hat, Cairns was in the Gulf as a spin-doctor during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, "working in support of RAF operations in Kuwait and Iraq", as his squadron's website boasts. His duties as a press officer included "handling" BBC hacks such as Nicholas Witchell.

So pleased is the RAF at having a top BBC editor that it flies him over from Belfast every month to teach military personnel how to deal with hacks in the field – including his BBC colleagues. He has also made training videos for the RAF using BBC footage. "The Royal Air Force is keen to promote its image," the 7644 squadron website explains. "To achieve this, officers of all ranks need a range of media training and particularly interview training… Squadron personnel are able to play the role of the media and to answer questions on how or why they work in a particular way, from personal experience." And, as the commanding officer, Cairns leads by example.

But should he? "There are considerable dangers of a conflict of interest," the official BBC guidelines warn, "if BBC people train individuals or organisations in how to present themselves on television, radio or online. Producers, editors and journalistic staff must obtain permission from their manager before undertaking any outside training work." News, current affairs and topical programmes are the most sensitive areas, "and it is very unlikely that it will be acceptable for producers or editorial people in these areas to undertake any outside coaching on how to appear on air."

Yet, by his own admission, this is precisely what Wing Commander "Biggles" Cairns does. Trebles all round in the officers' mess!

LEGAL NEWS

RADIO producer and barrister Bruce Hyman gave new meaning to the term "unreliable evidence" when he admitted inventing a legal authority at Taunton crown court this month.

Hyman pleaded guilty to perverting the course of justice and could face jail when the case comes up for sentencing in September. The barrister, best known for producing radio comedies including *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, as well as Radio 4's legal programme *Unreliable Evidence,* was accused of sending a phony legal document to Simon Eades, the father of a child whose mother he was representing in the family courts.

Hyman was caught sending the email, which Eades initially believed was a helpful document from campaign group Families Need Fathers, on CCTV.

The Bar Council should by now have received Hyman's resignation, as it was a condition of his bail. He has also quit Doughty Street chambers where he practised law when not producing plays, radio and television or writing scripts for various people, among them Gordon Brown.

HOT AIRTIME

STAFF on Radio 4's *Today* programme have long anticipated the day when presenter James Naughtie would ask a question so long and rambling that all his interviewee would be left to do was answer "yes" or "no".

And lo it came to pass at 8.20am on 21 August when, in a discussion about the failure to deport the murderer of headmaster Philip Lawrence, and just moments after his widow had apologised for having "lost track of what you said", the following exchange occurred:

Naughtie: I suppose really what has hit you in the last little while is the sort of shock of realising that what you'd come to expect was going to happen isn't happening. And that's really – it's not that you want to necessarily see him in Italy as a… as an objective fact, but just that you felt it was going to happen and now it's not going to happen.

Francis Lawrence: Mm.

Mrs Lawrence wasn't the only interviewee to be rendered speechless by the great broadcaster. In the same week Naughtie also asked Robert Fox, defence correspondent of the *Evening Standard,* about British military involvement in Iraq. "My answer to that can be a lot briefer than your question," replied Fox succinctly.

Ann Parry, 40, Heather Tansley, 39, and Carole Davis, 37, of Wrexham, are setting off from from Lands End on August 17 and expect to reach Lands End 14 days later. So far they have raised £600.

Flintshire Evening Leader

"They take a photo of you being told the price of the tickets"

IN 1992 the president of Fox TV brought a male stripper on to the podium at a News Corp seminar in Aspen, Colorado, to illustrate a point about censorship. Rupert Murdoch was incensed, not least because it embarrassed his special guest, the then defence secretary Dick Cheney.

"Sometimes the hardest job a captain has is to terminate his best lieutenant," quoth the Digger, who sacked the Fox executive forthwith. "But one thing this company has to stand for is that there are limits." Observers of Murdoch's moral maze have been wondering ever since what those limits are.

Rebekah Wade was banged up in the cells after a drunken contretemps with her husband Ross Kemp, but she kept her job. One of the Digger's senior Australian hacks, Glenn Milne, leapt drunkenly on to the stage at a televised awards ceremony last year and started punching the presenter; he too kept his job.

It was Milne, ironically enough, who broke the story last week that Australian Labour leader Kevin Rudd had visited a New York lapdancing club four years ago. But the real villain of the piece was Col Allan, editor of Murdoch's *New York Post*: it was he, after dinner with Rudd, who suggested they have another drink and lured him off to a "bar" which turned out to be the Scores strip-club.

Will the Digger discipline his lieutenant at the *Post*? There's no sign of it. Embarrassing a top US politician whom Murdoch wishes to schmooze by confronting him with a stripper is beyond the limits. Embarrassing a top Australian politician whom Murdoch doesn't support by confronting him with a whole menagerie of strippers is, clearly, well within them.

DUMB BRITAIN

Century Radio

Presenter: Was Shakespeare born in Stoke-on-Trent, yes or no?

Caller: Yes.

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: Which famous writer fought in the Crimean War, Leo Tolstoy or Charles Dickens?

Contestant: Charles Dickens.

Robinson: Which Middle Eastern country's flag contains a line from the Quran over a sword on a green background?

Contestant: Israel.

National Lottery Jet Set, BBC1

Eamonn Holmes: Assam is what kind of beverage?

Contestant (young male): Is it beer?

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

SIR PHILIP GREEN INVESTIGATES "NON-ETHICAL TREATMENT OF WORKERS" CLAIM:
HAVE WE EVER, EVER, EVER FORCED YOU TO.....
...WEAR THIS CRAP?
ERM.... NO, ... NEVER!
I'M SATISFIED!
I SWEAT TOP SHOP

BOSTON STUMPED

BACK in May the electors of Boston, Lincs, turned the town hall upside down. Campaigners in favour of a much-needed by-pass won 25 seats out of 32 in the borough council elections, seizing control of the previously Tory-dominated "no overall control" chamber.

With only a couple of members having any experience as councillors, the Boston By-Pass Independent Party has had to learn fast – not least about the fiasco that is the town's new sports stadium, the Princess Royal Sports Arena (PRSA).

Within weeks the new members were being lectured by the Audit Commission, which had investigated the financing of the project. Before it opened in 2003 it had been presented as a good deal for the town – the council would only have to find £3m, and in 2002 consultants asserted that the PRSA would make £400,000 profit in its first five years.

Alas, that fanciful figure turned into a £325,000 loss. Although the council can review its commitment next year, if it continues to put money in, it will have spent an estimated £8.25m by 2012.

The Audit Commission says there were "key shortcomings" in the way rising costs were monitored, and estimates of net surpluses were "grossly inaccurate". It found that at least two contracts were not authorised by councillors. "A number of non-construction contracts, some for significant amounts, were let without any form of competitive tender" – although it adds the strange rider that "there is no reason to suggest this was not done for proper reasons".

Councillors thought money could be clawed back through catering at the stadium but have discovered all the rights had been handed to the local rugby club.

So who's to blame? Most senior staff, including the chief executive and the politicians who made the decisions, have long since gone and the Audit Commission did not apportion blame. So the new council has decided to let sleeping dogs lie. Which shows that the ways of local government are not that difficult to pick up, after all.

YAH, BOO, SUCKS

SO. FAREWELL then Bedfordshire county council. The useless authority faces the axe after its bid to lead a new "unitary" council in the area was rejected by the government. Instead, its functions will be absorbed by rival Bedford borough council.

Instead of going gracefully, however, the Tory council seems intent on a GLC-style *Götterdämmerung*. Having pointlessly spent £300,000 of taxpayers' money on its pathetic "We Love Bedfordshire" unitary campaign, plus nearly £40,000 on lobbyists Bell Pottinger, BCC immediately announced that it would spend another £75,000 on a judicial review to challenge the decision.

This is all of a piece with the reasons BCC is being abolished in the first place. Despite being Britain's fourth smallest county by area (and 12th smallest county by population) residents pay the UK's third-highest council tax. And what value they enjoy!

In 2001 Bedfordshire signed a 12-year, £267m part-privatisation deal with Hyder Business Services to run admin services... then spent another £14m to get HBS to clear off only four years later (*Eyes passim*).

Just before the unitary result, BCC announced a refit of its offices at a cost of £300,000. Despite the result the council said it would spend the money anyway, since County Hall might be needed by the new authority. But Bedford borough council said it did not want the brutalist building, once described as "a concrete skip with windows". Bedfordshire's response was to announce that it will go ahead instead with a top-to-bottom refurbishment at a cost of £2m, thereby bequeathing the new council the county's ugliest building to maintain or demolish, a no-win situation. But who cares? It's only taxpayers' money after all.

SHARPE PRACTICE

EIGHT months and £330,000 in legal fees after calls for a probe into shenanigans over contracts between Isle of Wight council and engineering firm High-Point Rendel (H-PR), m'learned friends engaged by chief executive Joe "Vera" Duckworth have come to similar conclusions to two previously-suppressed reports produced more than two years ago (*Eyes passim*).

Lawyers Sharpe Pritchard have reported to the council's investigation committee set up to look into the scandal, that contracts with H-PR in 2001 and 2004 were "entered into in breach of the procurement regulations" and "almost certainly in breach of the council's standing orders". The little matter of an apparent absence of formal contract documents is also touched on.

This broadly echoes the conclusions in 2005 of lawyers Addleshaw Goddard and procurement procedure consultants QP Group Ltd, on the council's dealings with H-PR over its controversial Undercliff Drive coast road reinstatement scheme. Sharpe Pritchard urge the council to "explore ways in which it can satisfy itself that H-PR are delivering value for money".

A pity for Isle of Wight council taxpayers that this expensive legal opinion comes three years after the council's executive had the opportunity, in May 2004, to pose this question itself, when faced with the news that H-PR's bill for the project had shot up from £5.6m to an eye-watering £12.8m.

Comparisons with H-PR's disastrous coastal defence scheme in Scarborough were inescapable, even down to the fact the same senior official was in overall charge of things – one Derek Rowell, who left Scarborough as storm clouds loomed, to re-emerge in the Isle of Wight. He, along with several others, remains suspended during the latest inquiries.

● MEANWHILE in Scarborough Inspector Knacker has appointed two senior detectives to look into the sea defences scandal... only two-and-a-half years after *Eye* 1025 first wrote about it. Engineering consultant High-Point Rendel was illegally hired without a proper tendering process and carried out inadequate surveys; the engineer in charge (since promoted) forged a report justifying the contract *after* doubts were raised. As a result building costs were allowed to rise from an estimated £28.6m to more than £40m and H-PR got away with doubling its supervision charges from £1.2m to £2.4m. No heads rolled: the officers responsible either retired on fat pensions, or moved into lucrative jobs elsewhere. Nice work all round.

WILD ABOUT HARRY

ONCE upon a time Harry Phibbs, described in the *Eye* as "the world's most unpleasant Young Conservative" (issue 670), was a prominent right-winger in the Federation of Conservative Students.

The FCS was disbanded in 1986 because it was too right-wing even for the then Tory party chairman Norman Tebbit. Phibbs went on to work on the *Evening Standard*'s Londoner's Diary, where he authored stories attempting to smear Westminster Labour councillors who had helped expose the Shirley Porter "homes for votes" scandal (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*), helping earn the *Standard* the sobriquet "Porter's Poodle".

In middle age Phibbs has re-emerged as a leading member of Call Me Dave's caring Conservatives on Hammersmith and Fulham council. Earlier this year the Tories at H&F voted to give themselves an 18 percent rise in allowances shortly after voting through a savage round of cuts in services. In the ensuing uproar the Tories backtracked on the rise, blaming a "clerical error" on the part of council officers.

Earlier this month Phibbs was still insisting, in the pages of the local paper, that the whopping rise he voted for was "an administrative error" – ie incompetence rather than greed. Happily Phibbs himself has not missed out on extra dosh. In June H&F Tories voted to pay an extra £6,034 a year to any member sitting on the council's adoptions panel – work that, because of its nature, was always previously done for free. Who has stepped forward to accept this allowance, thereby boosting his council salary by 60 percent? One H. Phibbs.

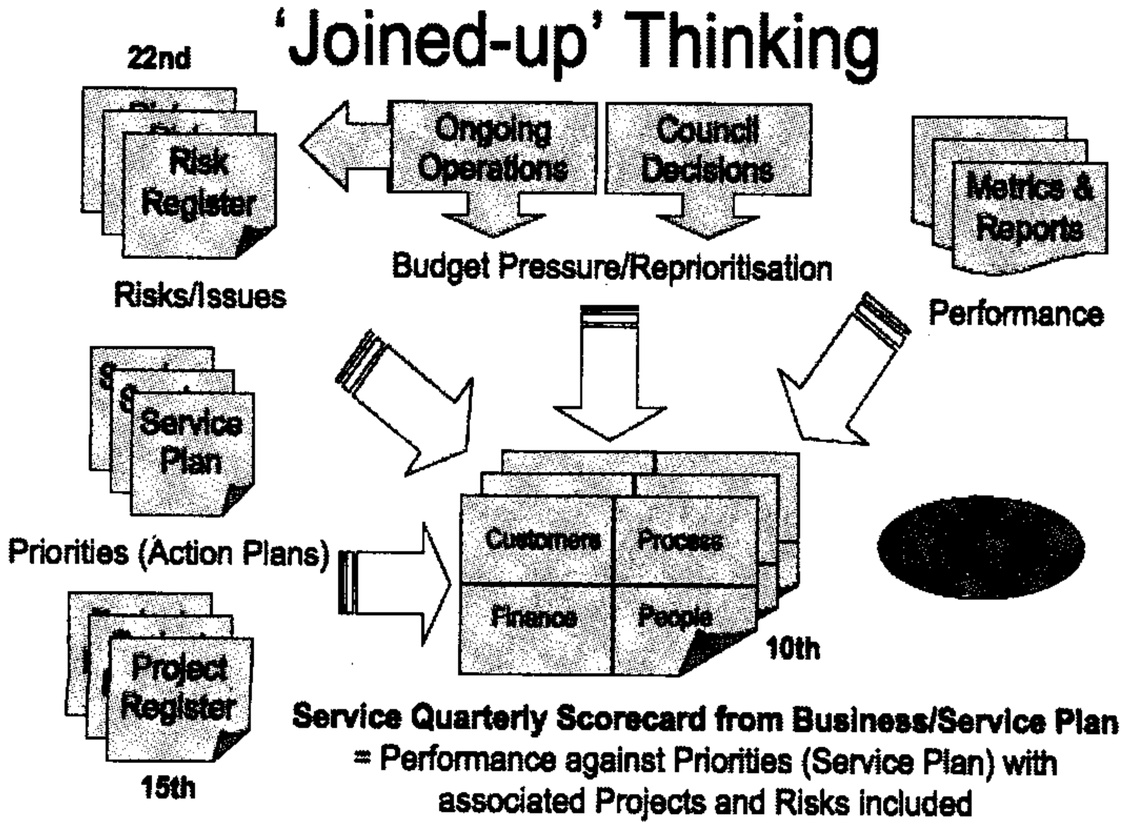
FOR FOX SAKE

THIS WEEK's triumph for the Standards Board for England, the multi-million pound watchdog meant to police councillors' behaviour, comes from Plymouth, where the SBE has declined to look into an allegation that Tory city councillor Andy Fox, in the course of a parking dispute outside a British Heart Foundation shop, raised his hand at the shop's manager, Patricia Pethick, "as if he was going to hit the complainant" and yelled "Fuck off, you slag".

The Standards Board has decided it will not investigate whether Cllr Fox was guilty of "bringing the council into disrepute" or, indeed, "failed to treat others with respect" because he was not engaged on council business at the time. So that's all right, then.

FRANKLY SPEAKING

MANY of the local government documents that arrive in the Rotten Boroughs office are heavy going. But Ian J. Franks, "Performance and Change Manager – Corporate Core" at Oxfordshire county council, with his 20-page "Corporate Core Quarterly Reporting Proposal Review", has scored a first. We cannot understand a single word of it. Mr Franks, who revels in the world of balanced scorecards and baskets of performance indicators (*see extract*) wins a nomination in the Blue-Sky Thinking category of this year's Rotten Boroughs Awards. Well done!

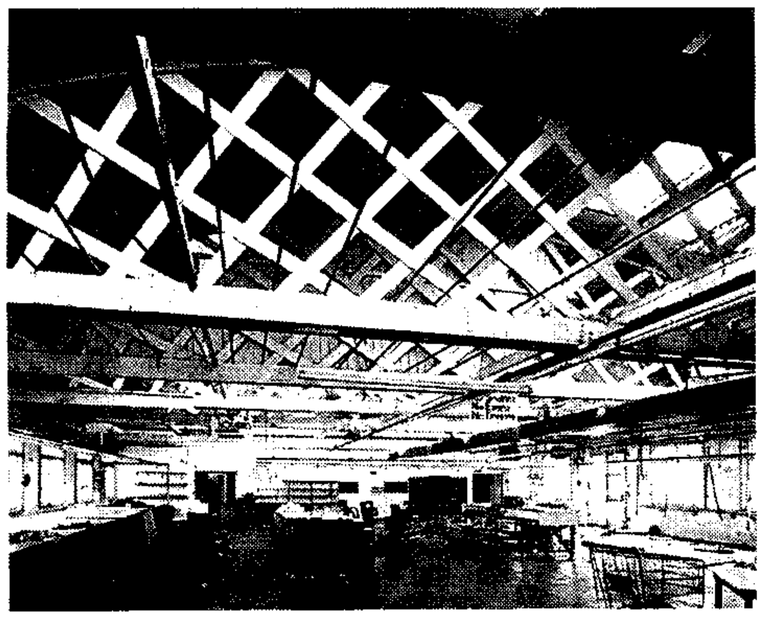


NOOKS and CORNERS

AS ARTS and lottery budgets are raided, the full extent of the cultural catastrophe that is the 2012 London Olympic Games is slowly emerging.

Although politicians claim the Games will "regenerate" the East End, businesses and residents that are in the way of the project are being evicted. And now there is an architectural cost, as the Olympic Delivery Authority decides that historic buildings must also be demolished.

The part of north-east London on which the Olympic vision is being imposed is not rich in historic architecture but, nevertheless, there are interesting and useful buildings. In Carpenter's Road in Hackney Wick, for instance, there is the former jam and sweet factory of Messrs Clarke, Nickolls & Coombs, built in 1903-12 – interesting enough to be described in the new Pevsner on London East. Two of the buildings have early and rare examples of curved roofs supported on wooden Belfast trusses – a form of construction later used for aircraft hangars. These structures



Belfast trusses at King's Yard

were to be retained in the first Olympic and Legacy Masterplan for the area, but last February the ODA changed its mind and proposed using the site for an "energy centre", that is, a power station burning woodchips, to supply the Athletes' Village.

Tom Ridge, a retired teacher, mounted the Save King's Yard Campaign, arguing that the Edwardian buildings on the site should be retained as a social enterprise centre for local businesses and that it would be more sensible to place the energy centre by the River Lea. The Victorian Society agreed that saving the buildings would not impede the Olympic development, adding that "there is so little of the East End's heritage left that surviving records of its industrial past should be treasured". Historians at English Heritage thought the structures should be listed although their management – no doubt mindful of the danger of making relations with the government even worse – declined to make this recommendation to the Department of Culture, Media 'n' Sport.

Alas, two weeks ago the ODA's planning panel granted planning permission for the energy centre on the King's Yard site. During a seven-hour meeting, Councillor Rofique Ahmed, the Labour-controlled London Borough of Tower Hamlet's only representative on the ODA, became conspicuous for only opening his mouth once (to ask to be excused) and failing to support Mr Ridge's plan to save some of the dwindling number of historic buildings in the borough (remember the Bonner Street School? *Eye* 1171).

The loss of these buildings is not, I suppose, as bad as what we are told is going on in Peking, where the few historic buildings that escaped the Cultural Revolution are being destroyed for the 2008 Olympics. But it is depressing enough to think that soon the Lea Valley will be filled only with expensive modern structures designed by our thrusting, cutting-edge architects – precious few of which will be much use to local people when the wretched Olympics are over.

HERE's a rum business in Devon. Plymouth City Council and many local people are infuriated at the decision of the DCMS to accept English Heritage's recommendation to list the Civic Centre, opened by the Queen in 1962.

This is not the sort of 1960s building that everyone loves to hate, but something of quality – although the council stopped maintaining it 20 years ago. Designed by Jellicoe, Ballantyne & Coleridge, it consists of a 14-storey administration tower with a lower reception building containing contemporary works of art. As part of regenerating plans, the council had hoped to replace the Civic Centre by a mixed-use office and retail development with a (yawn) "iconic!" building incorporated.

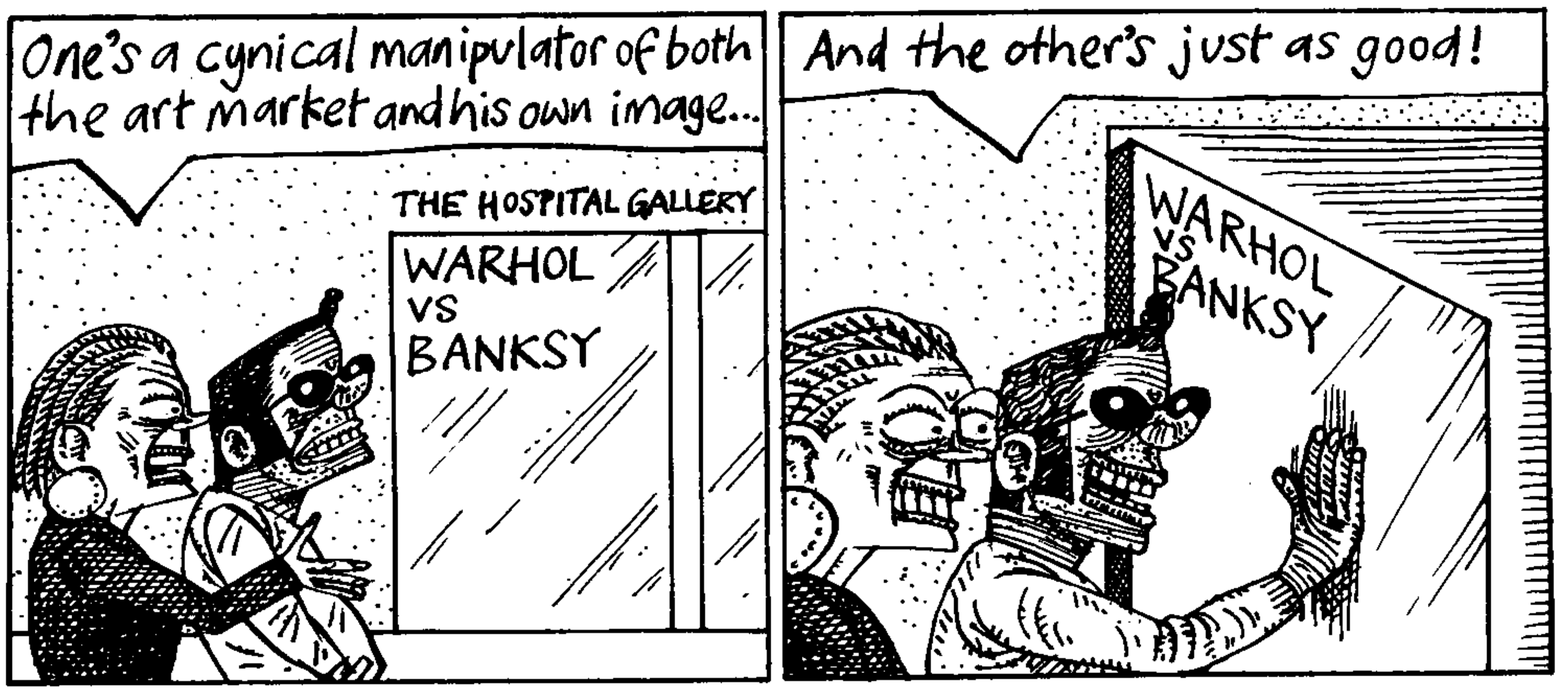
Alas, until the 1940s Plymouth was in great part a handsome historic city with a wealth of Regency architecture, but the many buildings that survived the bombing of the Second World War were bulldozed to make way for Sir Patrick Abercrombie's post-war rebuilding plan. This replaced the complex street pattern of the pre-war city with a simplistic grid of streets around shopping precincts surrounded by roundabouts and ring roads, and a long, wide, tediously totalitarian central avenue leading nowhere.

And now, after so many philistine decisions in the past, Plymouth would like to "reinvigorate" Abercrombie's dreary city with exciting new projects by demolishing one of the few post-war buildings of any distinction. Will they never learn? And will we as a nation ever learn to stop wasting resources by constantly demolishing sound buildings constituting so much embodied energy, and throwing away good solid masonry and materials? Perhaps we would if we didn't have so many architects and planners.

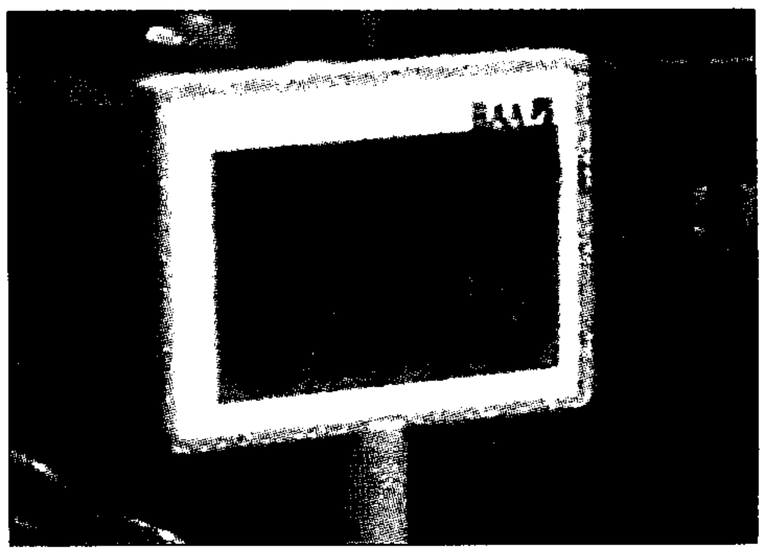
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

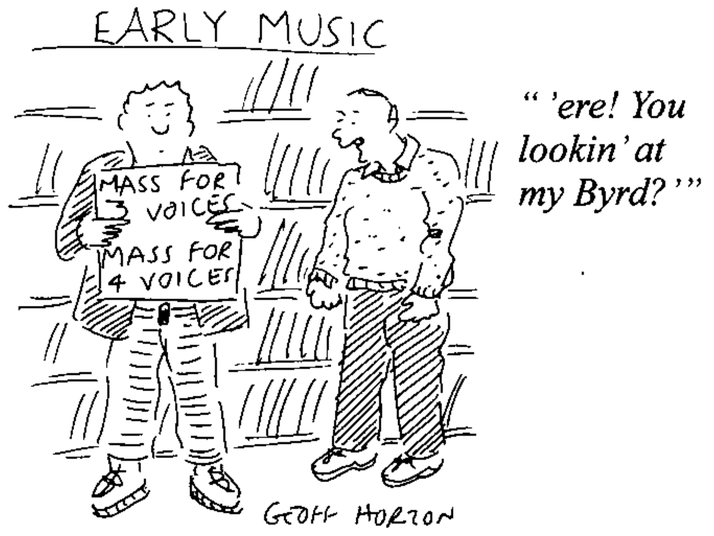
BY BIRCH


One's a cynical manipulator of both the art market and his own image...
THE HOSPITAL GALLERY
WARHOL VS BANKSY
And the other's just as good!
WARHOL VS BANKSY

I-SPY *Gatwick Airport*



Submitted by David Griffiths. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*



" 'ere! You lookin' at my Byrd?'"

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE catalogue of incompetence that has been Liverpool's so-called "preparation" for its role as European Capital of Culture next year has edged even closer to breakdown in the past week.

The story so far is a dismal tale of maladministration, badly judged appointments, recriminations and a lot of wasted money. And with four months to go, the schedule of events is no less thin and embarrassingly tacky than it was a year before. The project languishes in the hands of the Liverpool Culture Company, a shambolic operation run by one Jason Harborow, who, according to a member of his own staff, "couldn't run a sweetshop".

Now things have gone from bad to worse. The annual Matthew Street Festival, a pop and folk event that attracts vast crowds, earns around £40m for the city and should have taken place over last weekend's bank holiday, failed to happen because Harborow pulled the plug at the last minute.

Officially the festival, whose running was entrusted to the Culture Company alongside its 2008 responsibilities, was cancelled on health and safety grounds. In fact it collapsed because of what the *Liverpool Daily Post* called the Culture Company's "sheer, unmitigated, bungling incompetence".

In the resulting row everyone is calling for everyone else's resignation. Warren Bradley, leader of the city council, demanded that Harborow be "relieved of his duties". Meanwhile, the council's Labour opposition is demanding Bradley's head on the grounds that he is himself on the Culture Company board. In addition there has been a near-total breakdown of relationships between the key players in the 2008 project. Bradley and Harborow have barely spoken for weeks.

This would be comical if so much public money wasn't at stake. And money is no doubt a factor in Harborow's brazen refusal (so far) to accept responsibility and resign from his £150,000-a-year job. "If I or any of my team were to leave now," he said in apparent seriousness, "it will be catastrophic for 2008."

But hasn't catastrophe struck already?

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Floral tribute

Sir,

I have just read your issue 1191. It is very good. Just one minor criticism – the photograph "Poppy Crop" on page 21 should have been the front cover. Carry on the good work.

Yours sincerely,
R. BENNETT,

Cheltenham.

Sir,

The [Poppy Crop] cartoon on page 21 is pithy, poignant and deeply moving. May I respectfully suggest that it be turned into an A4 poster? This would bear the masthead "Record Poppy Crop in Afghanistan", then the picture, then the subhead "*and Iraq", below which would be in large bold letters the legend "Bring Our Troops Home".*

For myself I would be happy to pay a modest donation to such a campaign.

ALEX ALLARDICE (retired CofE cleric through occupationally contracted disease surviving on pension),

Via email.

Offence taken

Sir,

Jake Purches (1191) correctly points out that a cartoon in your satirical magazine depicting a Muslim woman breastfeeding men was not sensitive to your Muslim readers.

I've also noticed other cartoons and articles in your satirical publication which are not sensitive to Christians, Jews, religious people, non-religious people, politicians, judges, journalists, lawyers, TV presenters, artists, businessmen, liberals, fascists, supermodels, yobs, stupid people, pretentious people, the dead and the alive. Kindly refrain from publishing such matter in the future.

Regards,
DARREN WARNER,

Via email.

Sir,

Jake Purches (Letters, 1191) may have found the cartoon of a bare-breasted hijabed woman "disgusting" and "extremely insulting" – but what of the insane fatwa it was illustrating?

Yes, I was shocked but at the same time thought it was funny, naughty and most apt.

Private Eye is full of insults to Jews and Christians, why exempt Muslims? Keep laughing!

Salaams,
FEMALE MUSLIM ELDER,

Address supplied.

Rodgers and out

Sir,

Your hilarious Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book (1191) suggests that "You'll Never Walk Alone" was composed by Gerry & The Pacemakers. It was in fact written by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II for the film Carousel, named by Time magazine as the best musical of the 20th century.

Yours pedantically,
RAJ KOTHARI,

Bridport, Dorset.

The Diana Years 9.00pm Sky One
The second instalment of this comprehensive and not too crawly tribute covers 1985–92. It shows how the princess, trapped in a ham marriage,
Radio Times

Glad tidings

Sir,

It was heartening to read M.D.'s positive stories (Doing the Rounds, 1190). I wonder if, on occasion, the other regular contributors to your organ could be persuaded to write some positive stories. Surely Remote Controller must watch a good TV programme and Bookworm read a good book occasionally. While I am not expecting much in the way of good news from the Rotten Boroughs column, is the rest of society in such a dire state that you can find no good news in education, agriculture, railways, architecture and journalism? Perhaps this could become an annual "Silly Season" issue.

Yours jadedly,
MATTHEW FLYNN,

Via email.

Is it just ME?

Sir,

M.D. is quite right to describe ME as "one of the most ignored and vilified illnesses of recent years" but, despite a few supportive doctors like Dr Crawley in Bath, the NHS continues to provide very little proper help for most sufferers. The government, to my knowledge, has yet to commit any money for research into this illness (apart from some paid to psychiatrists to prove it's all psychosomatic).

A few years ago they finally allocated a one-off payment of £8.5m to set up some clinics, but these offer no diagnostic tests or actual treatment, only such controversial coping strategies as cognitive behavioural therapy and graded exercise therapy. That £8.5m compares rather poorly, I feel, with the £20bn (is it?) currently being squandered on the new NHS computer system.

Yours faithfully,
GRAHAM CHAINEY (longtime ME sufferer),

Brighton.

Disorder! Disorder!

Sir,

I was surprised to note that "Gavel Basher" in his piece about Speaker Michael Martin (Eye, 1191) omitted to mention the seminal fact that Martin, partisan and quite out of his depth though he be, should never have been Speaker at all.

Following the reign of the excellent Betty Boothroyd back in 1997, by tradition the new Speaker should have been a Tory; but Labour, as crooked as always, used its enormous majority to bulldoze the ineffable Martin into office and we've been stuck with him ever since.

Kind regards,
MALCOLM GREGORY,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See

"Yeah... woke up this morning. Never never felt better in my life"

Ratbiter bitten?

Sir,

Has "Ratbiter" been bitten and infected by a New Labour rat? Your columnist writes (1191) that New Labour has reversed decades of UK policy and is now set on a course of aiding "liberals and democrats in the Arab world". Other than occasional mutterings from the government, no evidence is required to substantiate this remarkable news, and the overwhelming amount of evidence to the contrary is somehow passed over.

Most columnists don't read the papers they write for. Does "Ratbiter" suffer from the same condition? After all, you chaps have done a sterling job in reporting the BAE-Saudi affair. Or is arming and buttressing the most backward regime imaginable somehow aiding Saudi "liberals and democrats"? I could, of course, name all the other despotic Arab regimes the UK aids against popular overthrow, but see no reason to labour the point.

Very best wishes,
T. CHAHBOUNE,

Via email.

For Pete's sake

Sir,

As a general rule I try not to have anything to do with the vacuous and talentless, but I feel compelled to point out the error in Dan Stewart's letter (1191).

While the Babyshambles song "Pipedown" is indeed about crack cocaine use, it isn't Doherty's abuse but that of the group's former guitarist Patrick Waldron – hence the line "Paddy, put the pipe down". That Doherty is a hopeless drug addict is beyond dispute, in which case the precise drug of choice hardly matters.

RICHARD O'HAGAN,

Via email.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

WE GOT HERE JUST AS SOON AS WE COULD! WHAT'S THE PROGNOSIS???
BURNS UNIT
THIRD DEGREE BURNS! DOCTORS SAY IT COULD TAKE WEEKS FOR HIM TO RECOVER...
I WARNED HIM AGAINST GETTING CARRIED AWAY WITH THE HOME-GROWN JALAPEÑO CHILLIES - BUT HE WOULD NOT PUT THAT BURRITO DOWN!
NIL BY MOUTH
I'M SORRY, MR LOVLS, BUT FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO BE A "NO-SHOW" AT CONVERSATIONAL CANTONESE CLASSES

Pylon the agony

Sir,

Congratulations on being almost certainly the first publication south of Gretna Green to spot what Scottish and Southern Energy is trying to do in the Cairngorms National Park (Pylon Pressure, HP Sauce, 1191). What perhaps no one has noticed is that while SSE says it cannot afford to put its cable underground, there is no such problem when it comes to the 2012 Olympic games. London has already managed to bury 12kms of cable and knock down 52 pylons. It was not too expensive there, why is it too expensive in a national park?

Yours,
JO CUMMING,

Chair, Cairngorms Revolt Against Pylons.

Vulgar abuse?

Sir,

There's always been a strong whiff of the old fart about your venerable organ, and up to a point that's part of the appeal – like Test Match Special.

Recently, though, your latent fear of the mob seems to have tipped over into overt snobbery. Witness the cartoons on pages 15, 17, 19, 25 and arguably 21 of issue 1190 – besides the regular contributions of Yobs and Premiershits. The theme of all these is, basically: "Aren't the lower orders frightfully vulgar?" None of them are funny, either, apart from the consistent "Apparently".

Cut it out. If I want the Daily Mail I'll buy that instead and get all the free DVDs.

Actually, the funniest thing in the issue was probably the letter you printed from Keith Burstein. What a hoot.

Yours riff-raffingly,
PATRICK HANLY,

Warrington.

TB or not TB

Sir,

I get a little fed up of scientists whose main arguments consist of ad hominem attacks and misinformation ("Pro-Badger Smoothie", Letters, 1191). It's certainly not true that TB is a "cattle-to-cattle" problem, as Michael Clark claims. Of course you would expect most transmission to be within the herd or family (so it could equally sensibly be described as a "badger-to-badger" problem), but the best view at present seems to be that around 20 percent of new cases in areas of low incidence of the disease, and around 50 percent in areas of high incidence, are badger-to-cattle.

That said, at the suggestion of our local wildlife trust, of which I'm a member, I spent ages reading up on the whole bovine TB controversy, and at the end of it I've no more idea whether some form of culling of badgers in areas affected by the disease would reduce its incidence in cattle than I had when I started. The reason is that the trials as originally recommended by Sir John Krebs never took place, mainly because (a) the government would not force landowners in the trial areas to cooperate with the trial and (b) animal welfare considerations meant that the most efficient and effective methods of culling were not used. Culling efficiency is estimated therefore to have been between 60 percent and 20 percent.

As these damaging constraints were placed on the trials at the outset, I'm afraid I strongly suspect that the government went ahead with them, not with any real intention of finding out whether rigorously-conducted badger culls could help control bovine TB or not, but in order to delay any decision to a time at which, in 1998, they no doubt anticipated being out of office. Thus they kept the farmers more or less quiet for years while avoiding giving serious offence to the Labour party supporters among the animal welfare groups.

The cost to the taxpayer, cattle and badgers of these pseudo-trials has been enormous, and all, probably, in order to sidestep a politically difficult decision.

Yours,
PENNY TUCKER,

Via email.

Foot-in-mouth disease?

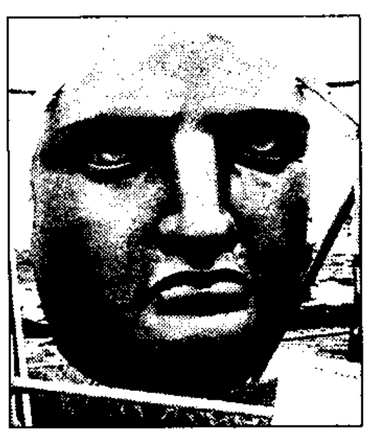
Sir,

Muckspreader's claim (1191) that "little has changed" since the 2001 foot-and-mouth crisis is perplexing. As of 17 August, the number of infected farms and culled farms is a mere handful, which is a really big change from 2001! And while the restricting of animal movements is causing problems for farmers, it's also an obvious way of stopping the disease (which would cause more problems) from spreading. It was stated in Section 8 of the 2002 Lessons To Be Learned Inquiry (http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/fmd/fmd_report/report/index.htm) that movement restrictions in 2001 should have occurred much earlier and that the government was criticised for not doing so; that's a second big change since 2001. What sort of change does he want to occur?

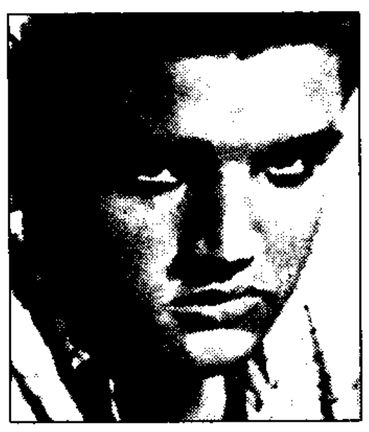
CHARLES ELLIS,

Via email.

Lookalike



Elvis



Liberty

Sir,

I have just returned from New York where, as usual, the two most enduring icons of that great country are Elvis and the Statue of Liberty.

However, a photograph of Liberty's face during construction in 1885 indicates that she and "the King" must be related and are possibly one and the same. Have we misunderestimated *the impact of cloning? Shall we tell the President?*

Regards,
LYNNE BOOTH,

Stoke Bishop, Bristol.

Ring of truth

Sir,

Re. Keith Burstein (Letters, 1190).

Wagner probably was fairly pleased with himself upon completing the Ring score, though maybe one should point out that he was disappointed by the way in which he had staged the first full performance, and is reported to have said "next year we'll do it all differently".

Furthermore, Wagner was never satisfied with his Tannhäuser *score, and died with the regret that he had not found time to refashion both this work and* Flying Dutchman. *Sounds to me a good deal like "must try harder". All this, and more besides, from the greatest egoist in musical history? Is Burstein man enough to contend his crown? Keith, whoever you are, if you can knock together something better than* Tannhäuser *(perhaps a new Quixote?), I'll sing the lead* rôle *for free. I'll even halve my usual fee to only two doughnuts and a kiss.*

Yours, etc,
HAGEN DAZS,

Via email.

Logical response

Sir,

Drudge vs. The Guardian (1191)

I am at a loss to understand the satirical content of this story. As I read it, The Guardian, despite its editorial revulsion for Mr Drudge, has resisted the temptation to misuse its sponsorship relationship with the Edinburgh TV festival, and cheerfully (it would seem) accepted that providing a forum for the expression of diverse opinions is the type of event with which they wish to have their brand associated. Surely this is a "good" thing, isn't it?

Yours,
JEREMY PAVIER,

Via email.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

I was greatly amused to see Ian Johnston's photo last issue of your mighty organ placed among a selection of salacious "lad's mag" titles in a supermarket.

I wonder, do you have any other photos of august journalistic institutions placed a little too close to gorgeous pouting babes?

Yours faithfully,
GRAHAM DEANS WILLIAMSON,

Middlesbrough.

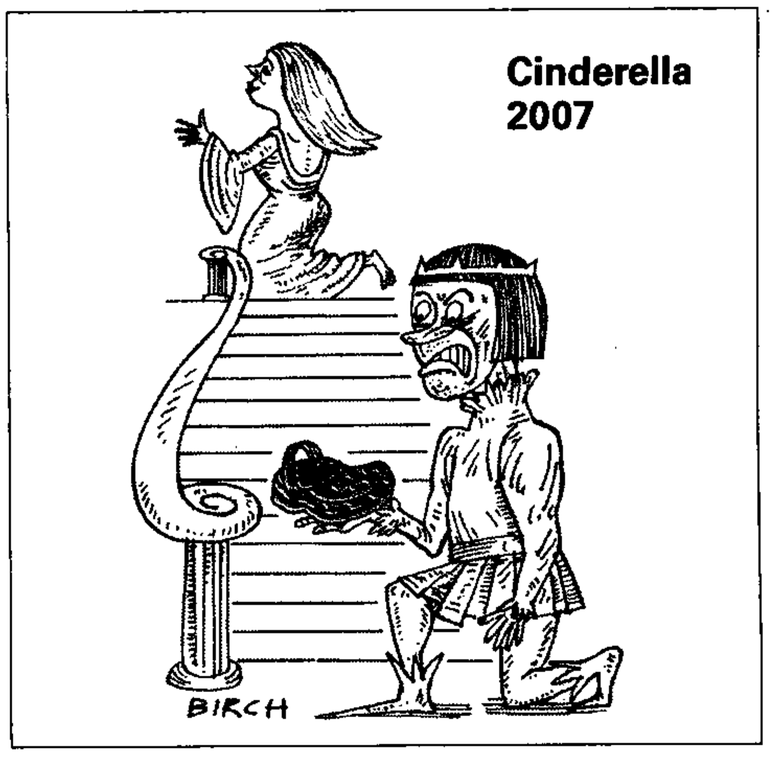
Train of thought

Sir,

I was distressed to see that you appeared to ascribe the delays to the Thameslink project (Signal Failures, 1190) to prevarication "ad nauseam" by the government at the expense of long-suffering travellers. The true cause of the delay was the public nausea and endless (ultimately futile) hearings re the planned (and now to be fulfilled) rape of Borough market, listed buildings and an old London community. Perhaps Piloti should have a chat with Dr. B. Ching occasionally?

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL WELLAND,

Via email.



Oil's not well

Sir,

Re: "Iraq Oil: Shell of a Business" (In the Back, 1191)

Why do I feel that you have your finger up my nose, but are picking at the wrong place?

The author once again chooses to underestimate the professionalism of Iraqi oil experts. The first major oil contract signed ten days or so ago was for a service contract (not a PSA) with Chevron and Total on the Majnoon Field. The Iraqis know what they are doing; one can only hope that this is also true for the foreign investors.

If Iraq wishes to attract large sums of foreign capital to invest in high risk long lead time mega-oil projects, then a well balanced fairly negotiated PSA is one of the most commercially viable options open to the Iraqi government. Their oil ministry used such contracts under Saddam, so are more than familiar with how they work.

Surprise surprise. The FCO actually chose to employ someone who has practical knowledge of petroleum contracts as their specialist adviser on the subject. Should they perhaps have approached the author of this article instead? For once I am reassured that my hard earned taxes are being wisely spent.

As one of the not so subtle ex-BP executives sent to Baghdad by the FCO, please be assured that I was employed as an independent energy consultant. I had had no contact with BP (except for my monthly pension cheque) from the time I retired in 1998 until after the Baghdad contract was completed in 2004. Nor did I share the FCO consultancy in tandem with anyone else.

Please read the Iraqi constitution. Iraq oil really is for all Iraqis – they mean it and it will be.

Regards,
TERRY ADAMS,

Holt.

Lookalike

Grove

Olivier

Sir,

Olivier's Richard III and The Times' Valerie Grove. Are they related?

ANON.,

Address unknown.

Sting in the tale

Sir,

The "Picnickers Guide to Social Insects" (1191, p16) may have unintentionally implied that all three castes of such wasps are equally venomous: in fact they are not.

Queens, workers and drones (males) of our current nine species of Vespidae (social wasps; one species, vespula austriaca produces no workers) are undoubtedly irritating when dining al fresco, especially late in summer – but only the females can sting, males lacking such an apparatus (hardly surprising: the sting having been modified from an ovipositor in other groups).

The easiest way to distinguish vespid females from males is to count the antennal segments: females have 12, males 13 – but the average picnicker may not wish to investigate this character at close quarters! Of course, if it stings, it is definitely female!

A.A. ALLEN (DR),

Dawlish, Devon.

SOLUTIONS

"Zurich Car Solutions Insurance" – *car insurance*

"WBB Minerals: Working together for mineral solutions" – *quarry*

"Bibby International Services: Providing Crew Management Solutions to the Marine Industry" – *sailors*

"Microsoft Certified Partners for Learning Solutions: premier training providers for Microsoft" – *teachers*

"JRB Enterprise Ltd: The Dog Pollution Solution" – *poo bins*

All submitted by readers

Raine's reign

Sir,

Re: Bookworm on Craig Raine. Bookworm's criticisms (1191) are misleadingly non-contextual, eg Raine didn't use "melons" for tits; he was quoting his lover; A la recherche du temps perdu *is as erotically triumphant as* A Game of Chess. *Fortunately, Bookworm's unsubstantiated claim that it was "ridiculed... as posh porn" (not confusing it with Rimbaud's* Arse *is he?) can only guarantee sell-out of Issue 1 and disappointing of the prurient.*

As he pays nobody, Raine isn't about to knock Faber bards qua *Faber bards. One has only to scan the covers of Areté to note a Faber host (pun intended). The surest hand in contemporary literature, he continues to promote the magnificent Chris Logue, and was first publisher of Chris Reid's moving elegies. However, he holds a Parnassian disdain for the kind of "poetry" embraced by whinin' Tom Paulin in his disastrous Faber Book of Socialist Verse; fuck, fuck, fuck, ejukayshahn, nayshahn. He also humiliated the BBC (if that's possible with MacMillan resident) and ensured* he'd *never get fat fees for near-midnight waffle when he dedicated Issue 11 to the disgracefully unproduced* Galileo *film script commissioned from Tom Stoppard.*

It's nice to see this long, phoney war hotting up even though the Eye is in the opposite trench. Indeed, for that reason if no other, I remain

Yours, a continuing subscriber,
JACK BROWN,

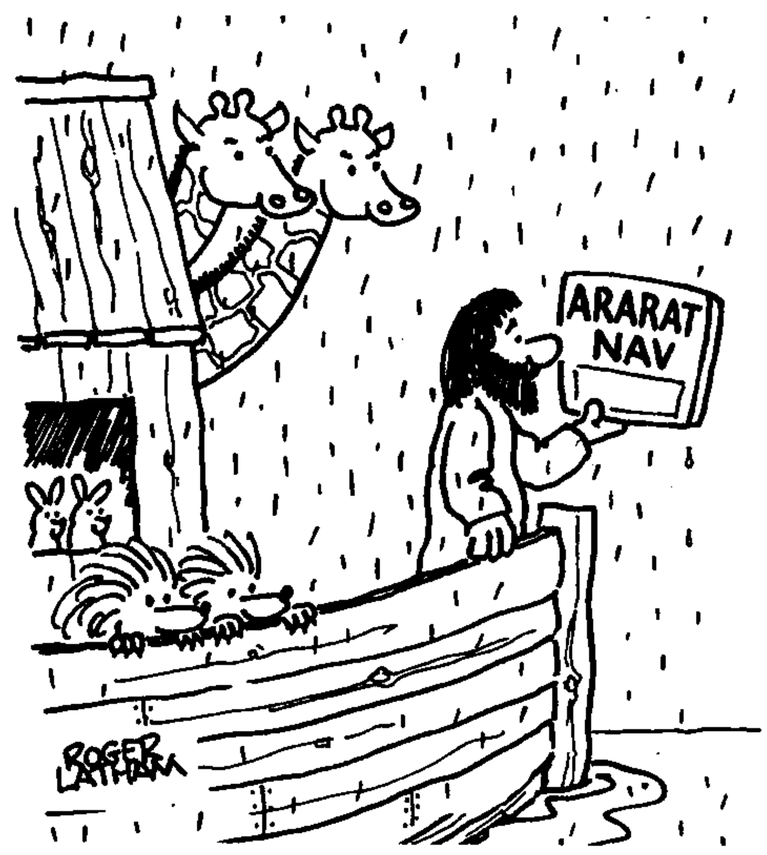
Barnsley.

Watching the defectives

Sir,

In reference to Alasdair Drysdale's letter (1191), it is in the conformation of the moustaches that one can tell Thomson from Thompson.

I was aware that the true identity of each defective detective (although they did meet with some success in the case of the street market pick-pocket) was made plain on at least one occasion,



With the prospect of another hot and dry summer, it's time to start collecting precious rainwater now to help guard against probable water shortages

Observer reader offer
July 2007

but could not remember when.

The answer: the edges of Thompson's moustache curve down, where the edges of Thomson's curve up! This is revealed on page 5 of "Cigars of the Pharaoh", the first adventure in which the detectives feature.

Yours, with little better to do with my time,
ALEXANDER KEITH,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"I'm looking at an empty cattle market. About a week ago this would have been full of 20,000 sheep, and this morning there's not a sausage to be seen..."

NATASHA PEACH, Radio Oxford
(Martin Easthaugh)

"Wenger walks to the edge of his technical area, arms in pockets."

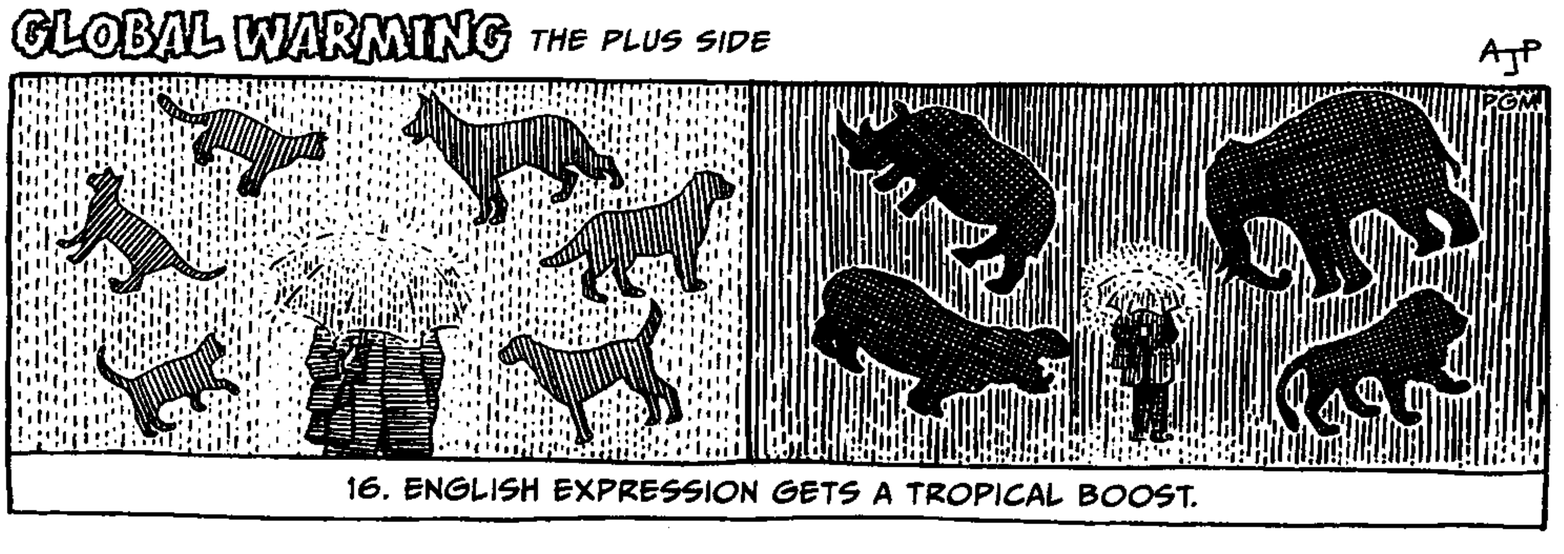
Commentator, Radio 5 Live
(Matthew Flenley)

"It's like Rugby by numbers... A, B, C..."

DEWI MORRIS, Sky Sports 2
(Gareth Burridge)

"He [Tony Wilson] understood that history is made, in a way, by those who make it."

PAUL MORLEY, BBC News 24
(Nick Finlay)



Letter from **Brazzaville**

from Our Own Correspondent

OURS is a country of contrasts – but none so sharp as the difference between how things seem and how they really are.

Take our latest elections. The president's party romped to victory (again) with 91.7 percent of the vote. Is this a reflection of our love for Denis Sassou-Nguesso, president since 1979? Is it that we still remember the horrific civil war after we sought another leader that ended only when Sassou's foreign friends helped him shoot his way back to the presidency? Or was the poll just rigged?

There are other contrasts in a country that is oil-rich but dirt poor. Sassou made us one of the most indebted places on the planet, yet with most of the population penniless we have almost nothing to show for it.

Now, though, the president says he has discovered the error of our ways. According to the World Bank and the IMF, the Republic of Congo has agreed to reform internal controls at the state-owned oil company, SNPC, and bring its accounting systems up to international standards. It will also prevent conflicts of interest in the marketing of oil, and require SNPC officials to divest from companies that have a business relationship with SNPC.

How unfortunate, then, that ugly reality has come crashing in. Sassou has in fact presided over the diversion of large chunks of our oil wealth into a network of off-shore companies managed by top officials. These include his son, Denis Christel, who is nicely positioned as boss of Cotrade, the marketing arm of the SNPC.

How do we know this? A court case was brought in Hong Kong by a "vulture fund" that is trying to collect debts our country defaulted on. The case revealed that shell companies based in the tax haven of Anguilla – Long Beach Limited and Elenga Investment Limited – are owned by Denis Christel and his number two at Cotrade, Blaise Elenga, respectively, and were receiving funds related to the sale of state oil. These companies were then settling lavish credit card bills run up by the pair on designer shopping sprees in Marbella, Monaco, Dubai and that staple favourite of West African dictators, Paris. Between March 2004 and October last year, just as we were negotiating our anti-poverty debt relief package, Denis Christel blew over $250,000 on one credit card alone.

Denis Christel has tried to stop London-based anti-corruption campaigners Global Witness from publishing such unseemly details. But Congo's accounting methods have already been scrutinised in the British courts. In 2005, Mr Justice Cooke chastised Denis Christel's "glaring conflict of interest" in selling state oil to private companies owned by the head of SNPC, and said the reason was either blatant corruption or sanction "at the highest level".

So there was disappointment this month for Denis Christel, his lawyers Schillings (motto, "protecting the reputations of high-profile individuals, corporates and brands") and barrister Matthew "Scrapper" Nicklin, who together failed to do for freedom of speech in the UK what Sassou-Nguesso has done so well in our country. Judge Stanley Burnton dismissed an application for an injunction against publication, saying: "Once there is good reason to doubt the propriety of the financial affairs of a public official there is a public interest in those affairs being open to public scrutiny… there may never be a trial in Hong Kong of the issue whether the Claimants [Denis Christel & Long Beach] are 'unsavoury or corrupt'. The specified documents, unless explained, frankly suggest that they are."

So there we have it: the World Bank and the IMF want to reward the crooks who have made us so poor – and it's left to transparency campaigners and debt collectors to show what's really happening. And they say *we* are the heart of darkness!

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

"Two years ago, a space ship sucked me up into its interior," Paul Hoffmann told reporters in Dresden, "and carried me off into space. The aliens probed my anus and genitalia, then manipulated my brain and sent me back to earth as an apprentice shaman, to bless the city in advance of the arrival of further aliens. Following their orders, I closed my bank account, bathed naked in a municipal fountain, then rode my bicycle naked through the streets of Dresden, at which point I was arrested by police and sent to a psychiatric hospital. But I have done nothing wrong. I am a victim of aliens, and I demand my freedom."

Hoffmann's lawsuit against Dresden city council is being handled by Jens Lorek, a

lawyer specialising in alien abductions. "My client's strange behaviour was caused by 'things unknown,' and there are no grounds for putting somebody in a psychiatric hospital simply because they've been manipulated by aliens. The state is socially responsible, even for alien shamans, if it cannot protect them from abduction. Since 1961, there have been thousands of alien abductions, and as Germany's first lawyer for victims of extraterrestrial harassment, I am determined to secure justice for my clients. Not all of them though. Earlier this year, I was hired by a Mrs J, who told me she'd been abducted by an alien life form that glowed bright green, smelled of coconuts, and jabbed her repeatedly in the shoulder, leaving little white dots on her back. She was crazy." *(Der Spiegel 11/1/07 and Lawyers Weekly 29/6/07. Spotter: Mal Function)*

– o –

"The average human farts about 14 times a day, most often while sleeping, producing a half-litre a day in gas volume. The most common gas produced is nitrogen, but if you consume a high-fibre diet, which is healthier, you also produce gases that damage the environment, such as carbon dioxide (CO2) and sometimes methane (CH4). Methane production in a fart is often hereditary, so not all people create it.

"The only way to eliminate your own greenhouse gases is to eat almost no fibre, but then you will probably die much younger than you should. However, by purchasing one or more products from Fart Neutral, you can offset your own emissions, quickly and easily. Our T shirts come with a certificate for 1,000 lbs reduction in greenhouse gases, and carry eye-catching slogans, such as 'Flatulence is natural but it can be neutral,' or 'Saving the planet 1 fart at a time.' Each article comes with a free Fart Neutral card that fully explains the issues facing the planet.

"If the word fart offends you, we also offer other products that get the same point across, without using the 'f' word." (Press release from Fart Neutral, San Francisco. Spotter: David Dallison)

– o –

"East Germany has recently come right back into fashion," Daniel Helbig and Guido Sand told reporters outside their Ostel hotel in Berlin, "and 'ostalgie' is cool. The German Democratic Republic was grey, but our memories of it are colourful. Trabant cars enjoy cult status, as do terrible old TV shows like 'Sandman,' and teenagers go to discos wearing blue Freie Deutsche Jugend blouses, or GDR army sporting association tracksuits. So the time seemed right to open a hotel that celebrates the joys of the GDR.

"As you can see, the reception desk is dominated by four clocks, giving the time in Moscow, Berlin, Havana, and Beijing. Each room has framed pictures of Erich Honecker and Horst Sindermann over the bed, keeping you under constant surveillance, and is equipped with a GDR-made radio, commode, thick glass lamps, floral-designed wallpaper, and plastic egg cups. Every item is authentic, and brings back a flood of memories for anyone who grew up in the East. We spent months hunting for the stuff at city flea markets. Our standard 'Pioneer Camp' dorm rooms are only 12 euros per bed, but for extra luxury, we recommend the Stasi suite at 59 euros. It is not bugged." *(India News, 9/7/07. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0815 hrs All officers assembled in canteen for working breakfast to assess the assignment of the entire Neasden force to the Climate Change Protest Camp at Heathrow. Officers equipped with calculators reported that this would result in a total of 4,812 hours overtime for the Neasden force. This would represent a welcome £1.2 million uplift in officers' income, but would sadly necessitate a reallocation of budgetary resources, resulting in the closure of the station on alternate Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

0920 hrs Emergency call-out received resulting in deployment of PCs Isleworth and Barkingside to Herbert Morrison Street where an elderly member of the House of Lords had caused a serious incident by protesting when a gang of youths vandalised his bicycle. After interviewing the members of the gang, the 'Neasden Killah Krew', as well as the parents of one of the youths, Ms Chavez and her current partner Winston Bravo, the officers concluded that, in attempting to defend himself, the peer had committed a serious assault on Ms Chavez's son and should be arrested on a charge of attempted homicide. Community police officers Dawn Dorito and Rachel Dunkin-D'Nut were despatched with ABCs (Acceptable Behaviour Contracts) for the youths to sign. Their funerals will be held at Neasden Crematorium on September 3rd (tube strike permitting).

1015 hrs An armed response unit was deployed to the head office of Channel Four Television, following the broadcasting of a documentary film entitled "Lunatic Islamo-Fascists At Large". The film had shown footage of clerics exhorting their followers to "Kill the Jews", "String Up the Poofs", "Stone the Shameless Women who Expose Their Faces in Public" and "Behead All Infidels Now".

The officers arrested the makers of the film under the Anti-Muslim Discrimination Acts 2001, 2004, 2005 and 2007, for wilfully attempting to incite racial hatred by showing footage of people inciting racial hatred. Employees of the television station unfortunately were caught in the crossfire, resulting in a number of fatalities.

1500 hrs CCTV operator demands assistance as two female suspects in the Nkomo Lido remove their upper garments to reveal their bare chests. A call for volunteers was answered by all male officers and some female ones.

2325 hrs Calls received from various members of the public alleging that a major battle had broken out on the Tabo Mbeki Estate between rival gangs of 11-year-olds fighting a "turf war" related to crack cocaine dealing, involving knives, handguns and AK47s. The callers were played a recording of the recent press conference by Chief Constable Sir Ian Knacker, calling for communities to take responsibility for the activities of their children and not to expect his officers to waste valuable police time dealing with crime.

GCSE TABLES

How Your Newspaper Fared

	A	B	M	F	U
Telegraph	37	98%	32%	94in	1,732,000
Times	42	84%	24%	38cm	874,000
Mail	94	72%	17%	36m	532,000
Guardian	17	1%	342%	42cc²	2
Independent	58	3%	N/A	37 hectares (Kent only)	None
Sun	7	-5%	43° F	1 yard	Page 3
Mirror	3	-3%	-15° C	Grapefruit Segments	Don't Know

Explanation of Table

A = Number of pictures of fruity girls leaping in air.
B = Percentage of pieces saying GCSEs have been dumbed down.
M = Percentage of editorials saying "Leave our kids alone".
F = Column inches devoted to Asian four-year-old who has got 27 A*s.
U = Number of readers who have deserted in desperation at number of incomprehensible space-filling GCSE tables.

UCAS Clearing

An Eye Service To Readers

Places Still Available

University of Lunn

(formerly Lunn Poly)

Facebook Studies, 4-year course including practical communication modules: talking to friends, posting pictures of self at Reading Festival, and compiling lists of Most Shaggable Members On Course.

University of Pretty

(formerly Pretty Polly)

Advanced Domestic Science, 33-year course: How to live with your parents for the rest of your life and stop them renting your room out

The Metropolitan University of Toynbee

(formerly Toynbee Polly)

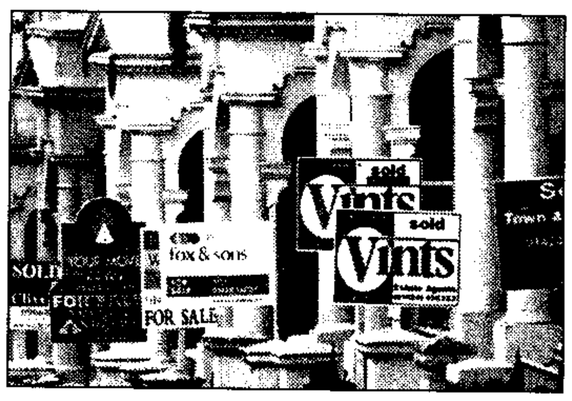
Football Management, 1-year course – may be curtailed to 2 matches depending on week-by-week results

(That's enough courses. Ed.)

Daily Mail
FRIDAY, AUGUST 31, 2007

WILL FALL IN HOUSE PRICES CAUSE FALL IN HOUSE PRICES?

By Our Property Staff
Clare Munger



THERE were fresh fears of a total collapse in the housing market after it was revealed that dangerously high levels of Chinese lead had been discovered unlabelled on Home Information Packs which are thought to be responsible for the outbreak of saucy BBC newsreaders flashing their thighs on the nightly news, which experts warn will almost certainly lead to the end of civilisation as we know it, as the nation descends into anarchy and *(cont. p. 94)*

POETRY CORNER

Lines on the Announcement of the Retirement of Tim Henman

So. Farewell
Then Tim
Henman,
Hero of
Wimbledon.

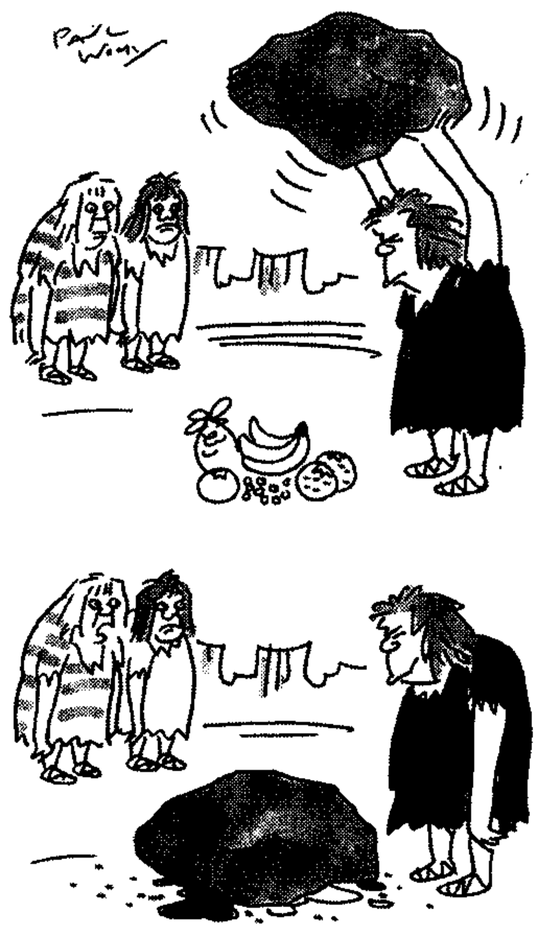
"Come on
Tim!"

That was
Our catchphrase.

But you
Never quite
Did.

E.J. Thribb (17½-15½)

● E.J. Thribb will be interviewed about his new collection of sporting poetry, *New Balls Please*, by fellow poet Sir Michael Horovitz at the Edinburgh Festival, Venue 17½ (McDonalds, seating upstairs, "Mind The Slippery Floor"). 9.30 a.m. Tuesday/Thursday/Sunday.



"He says he's invented the juicer"

Daily Telegraph

Top Ten On-Line Items

What You Are Reading

1. Piece about Top Ten On-Line Items: What you are reading
2. Er...
3. That's it.

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL SPORTS PAGES

An Apology

IN RECENT months and years we may have given the impression that Sven Goran Eriksson was unquestionably the worst football manager on the face of the planet, an inept randy Swede more interested in chasing the latest platinum blonde than trophy silver, and whose appointment as manager of Manchester City will unquestionably make that team the laughing stock of Europe.

We now realise, after Manchester City's great start to the premier league season, that nothing could be further from the truth, and that Sven Goran Eriksson is unquestionably the best football manager on the face of the planet, a master technician whose appointment will unquestionably make Manchester City the envy of every team in Europe.

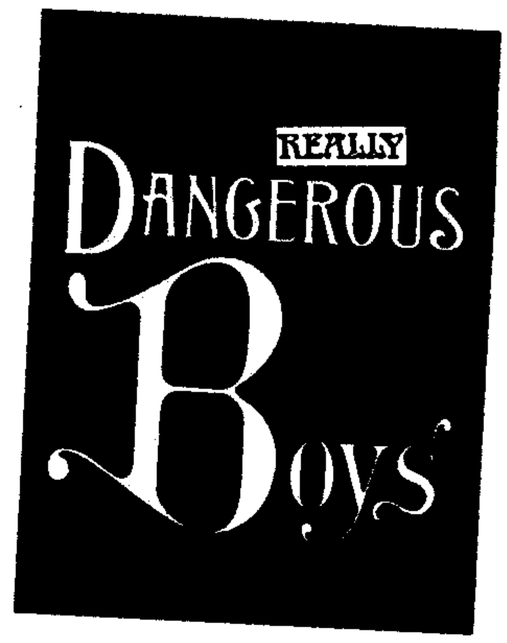
We apologise for any confusion caused, and any confusion in the future, when Manchester City lose a couple of games, and we brand Sven as an incompetent, randy loser with no etc...etc...etc...

© All newspapers.

Advertisement

The New Modern Bestseller

Over 1 million copies stolen



Contents

Chapter One: Turning your tree house into a crack den

Chapter Two: Hot wiring a Porsche, BMW or Mercedes

Chapter Three: The AK47. Its history and modification

Chapter Four: Great gangs of England

Chapter Five: Breeding pit bulls for fun and profit

Chapter Six: Songs for singing round the fire (car, house, school, etc). A selection of stirring rap anthems including "Fuk Tha Fukkin Fukka"

Chapter Seven: A guide to stolen Rolexes – all the whys and wherefores

Chapter Eight: Heroic Lives – Alfonso Stiletto, inventor of the Flick Knife

Chapter Nine: How to cook for yourself with only a Pot Noodle and a microwave

Chapter Ten: Posting threatening videos on YouTube *(That's enough. Ed.)*

the PREMIERSH*TS
OH NO BECKS IS DOWN!..
ENGLAND
ENGLAND INJURIES
ENGLAND V ISRAEL SEPT 8th
HE'S OUT COLD, THE PHYSIO'S ON THE PITCH...
CAPPUCCINO OR AMERICANO? DAVID, WAKE UP!
YEH, JET LAG CAN BE A RIGHT BUGGER
ZZZZZZ

LATE TV NEWS

CHANNEL 4 has launched "Channel 4 plus one", a digital channel that allows viewers the opportunity to miss its programmes after missing them earlier in the evening.

"The chance to miss 'Big Brother', 'Location, Location, Location' and 'Ten Years Younger' again is a twice-in-a-lifetime opportunity", said a delighted Channel 4 *(cont. p. 94)*

W.F. Deedes Notebook

WHEN I was a young man, the death of a mere journalist, however distinguished, would have attracted very little attention. In 1904, when I was a cub reporter on the Morning Post, I remember everyone on the paper was in a state of shock when our highly-respected editor Sir Ockinvole Crabtree-Blenkinsop dropped dead of a heart attack in the middle of our morning conference. No one batted an eyelid. His deputy, the very able P.R.J. Thistlethwaite immediately assumed the reins and instructed that this unfortunate event was not even to be reported in next day's edition. When I read the acres of newsprint which have been devoted in recent days to the demise of myself, it struck me how much things have changed in the course of the past hundred years.

Whether this is a change for the better or the worse, I will leave it to my readers to decide.

DUE to my new and unaccustomed status, I have lately acquired one of these new harps, which I am told in the right hands can make a very agreeable noise.

Alas, I have not yet mastered the instructions which, like so many things nowadays, come written in a great many different languages, few of which I have had the application to learn for myself over the years.

As a result, the sounds emanating from this particular cloud are not likely to find favour with the cognoscenti.

With a few million years of practise, however, the situation may well improve.

As to whether I am right, I leave that to my angelic audience to decide.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Lord Deedes, former Cabinet Minister and Editor of the Daily Telegraph

So. Farewell then
Bill Deedes,
Legendary journalist and
Tory politician.

"Shome mishtake
shurely?"

That was your
Catchphrase.

But sadly there was
No mistake
About the news of your
Decease.

What will be your epitaph?

My suggestion is:
"Discontinued age 94."

E.J. Thribb (17½)

Boris – What He Really Thinks

Bendy Buses

"Bloody awful. Wouldn't catch me on one."
Interview, GQ, 2004

Fox Hunting

"Just what brother fox deserves, if you ask me."
Clive Anderson Show, 2002

Football

"A lot of ghastly oiks drinking lager and getting paid too much."
Column, Spectator, 2001

Civil Partnerships

"Good idea. About time these silly buggers got married."
Phone-In, Radio 5 Live, 2004

Mrs Thatcher

"Bit of a lefty,"
Have I Got Newts For You, 2004

Hugo Chavez

"Cripes! You've caught me out there. Is he a member of a pop group or something?"
Interview, The Independent, 2006

Golliwogs

"What's wrong with them? I had two when I was a little chap. I called them 'Kenyatta' and 'Kaunda'. Takes you back, what?"
Letter, Eton College Chronicle, 1973

Trafalgar Square Pigeons

"Jolly little fellows! Bring them back, I say, You can't have too much of them."
London Lite, 2006

Extra-Marital Legover

"Top hole! Whoops! Leave that bit out, will you?"
Interview, Lads & Ladmen Magazine, 2005

Compiled by the Comspart Group for the Office of the London Mayor, 2007

EXCLUSIVE TO ALL PAPERS

THE BILL DEEDES I KNEW

by EVERY HACK

I WILL never forget my one encounter with the legendary Bill Deedes.

We had both been sent to cover the 1987 Conservative Party conference in Blackpool.

When I arrived at the station, I saw the unmistakable figure of Bill Deedes, dressed in plus-fours and weighed down with a full set of golf clubs.

"I shay," he said in his inimitable drawl, "are you going to this conference affair?"

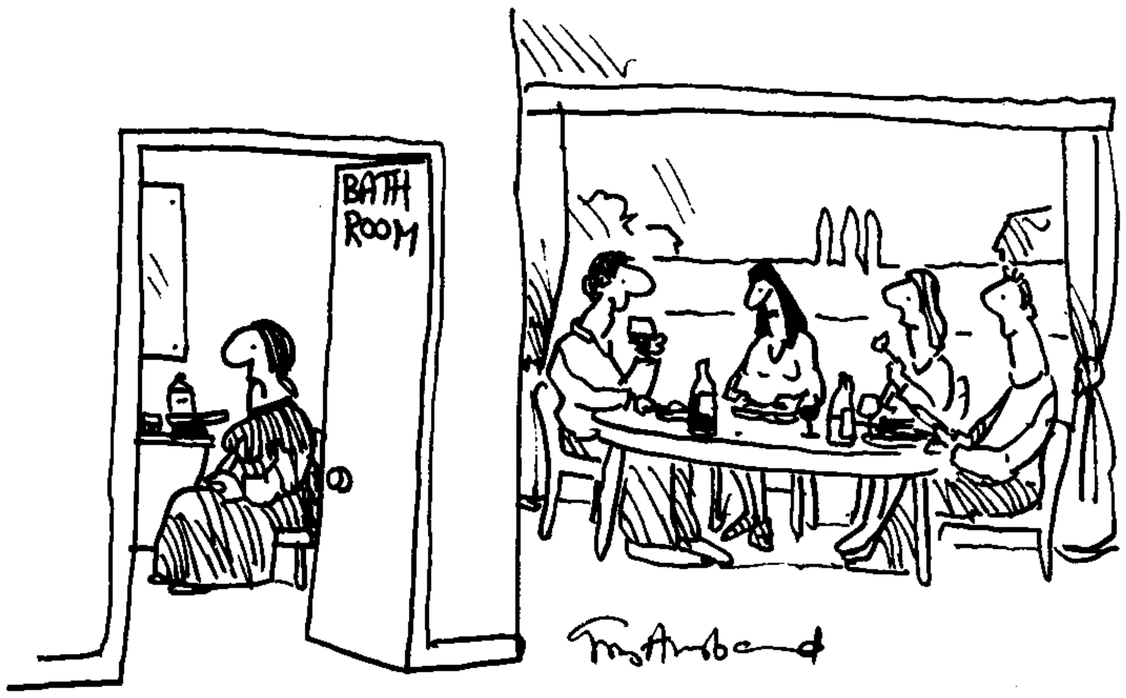
"Yes," I replied eagerly, looking forward to some sage insights into the inner machinations of the Tory hierarchy.

"Good," he responded. "Then you can help me with these clubs."

I think that said everything about the kind of man he was.

Now you can write your own Deedes tribute, even if you never met him! Just write the following sentences, in any order, and send to the *Daily Telegraph*, which will be delighted to print it.

- We shall never see his like again.
- He was the last of the gentleman journalists
- When they made Bill Deedes, they broke the mould.
- We shall never see his like again.



"...and we're in the nice position of employing my mother on a part-time basis too"

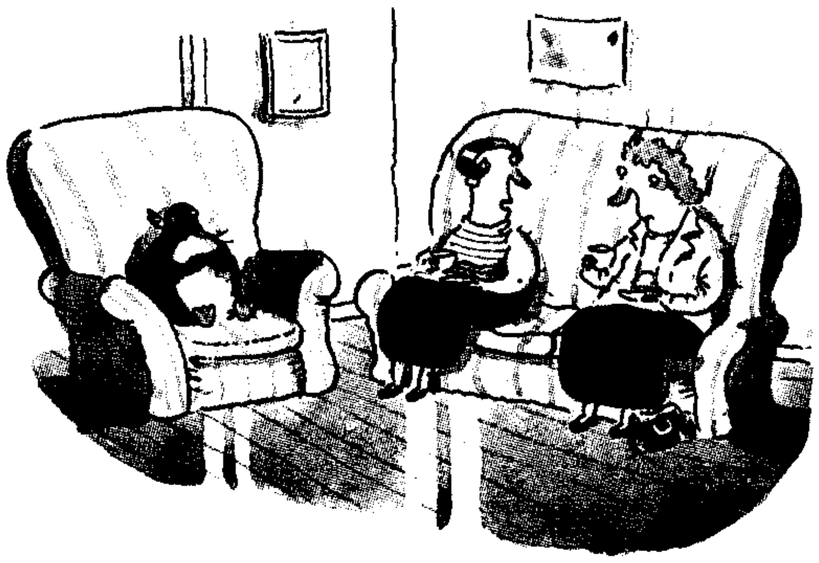
Autumn Highlights ITV/BBC

The Nation's Favourite View

Sir Trevor McDonald goes in search of Gryf Rhys-Jones up a mountain driven in a vintage car by Robbie Coltrane. Will he find Sir David Dimbleby looking for Neil Oliver on the coast? Or will he fly off to India instead to meet Sanjiv Bhaskar looking for Victoria Wood in the footsteps of Michael Palin?

Eye rating: Z-z-z-z-z

"Come in, Helen's just putting her face on"



"He doesn't like to talk about it now, but Frank was in the Falklands..."

BRITISH TOURISTS SAFE AS HURRICANE MISSES EVERYTHING WE SAID IT WAS GOING TO HIT

by Our Man In London Watching What's Happening In The Caribbean On Sky TV, **Phil Space**

THOUSANDS of British tourists – not to mention millions of foreigners – were last night heaving a sigh of relief when the killer hurricane passed *(cont. p. 94)*

TORIES: ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY SHOCK

by Our Political Staff **Matthew d'Ancona**

SPIN DOCTORS were last night fighting to save the political life of David Cameron, who had been rushed to hospital following a terrible accident involving a policy announcement that had horribly backfired on him.

"It's tragic," said one consultant. "There was David innocently trying to steal a march on the Labour Party by coming out with a shocking list of hospitals which were due to lose their Casualty departments, when – bang! – the whole thing just blew up in his face."

In an emergency operation, spin doctors had to point out that not everything Mr Cameron said had been completely wrong an that he had got some of his facts right.

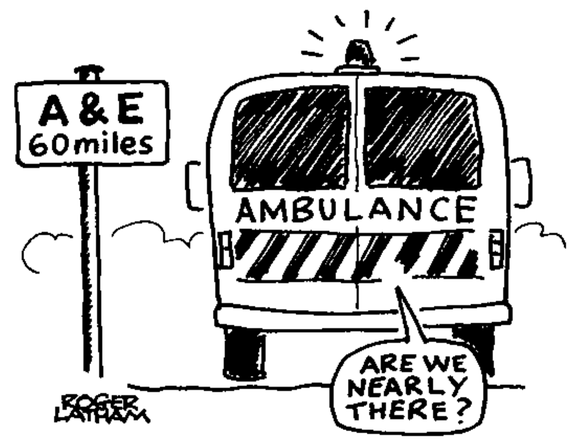
But Cameron's condition last night remained "highly critical – of all those stupid idiots who gave me this list of bloody hospitals and cocked it up".

ON OTHER PAGES

Is The Conservative Party Earmarked For Closure? **94**

Exclusive To All Papers

Study Reveals That The Longer Emergency Patients Spend In Ambulances Travelling To A Hospital, The More Likely They Are To Die



On other pages

■ The longer you spend being a bear increases the likelihood you will defecate in nearby woods.

■ The longer that a person spends being a Catholic increases their chances of becoming Pope.

THE BROON-ITES
THE NORTHERN NUMPTIES NIGGLED BY THE NATIONALISTS!
WEE LASSIE WENDY ALEXANDER HAS BECOME HEID OF THE JOCKSHIRE WING O' THA' LABOUR PARTY...
WELCOME WENDY, HEN
SO BROON-ITES... THE NEW LASSIE, THEN? GUID POINTS AND BAD POINTS? WHIT DAE YE THINK?
UMM...
ER...
GAE ON, YE SCUNNERS! SPEAK YER MINDS OR HAUD YER WHEESHT!
FIDGET
HENRY DAVIES
WELL GORDON, SHE'S AN OBSESSIVE FER TINY WEE DETAILS AN' DISNAE SEEM INTERESTED IN THA' BIG PICTURE...
...AND WHEN SHE DOES HA' AN IDEA SHE CANNAE BE FASHED TO EXPLAIN IT TO THA' PUBLIC...
AYE, SHE'S GOT NAE COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS...
SHE'S NO A TEAM PLAYER, THAT'S FER SURE...
YE GOT THAT REET! AN' WORST OF ALL, SHE HASNAE EVEN BEEN MADE LEADER FRAE' AN ELECTION, SO SHE CANNAE HA' THA' CONFIDENCE O' THE PARTY!
PUFF
PUFF
AH' APPRECIATE YER CANDOUR, MA BAIRNS, AND YE MAK' VERY GUID OBSERVATIONS.
NOO TELL ME THIS...
DOES SHE HA' ANY BAD POINTS AT ALL?
SWOON!
HELP...
SWOON!
...MA BOAB...
SWOON!
...AND JINGS!

EXCLUSIVE TO DAILY EXPRESS, DAILY MAIL, ETC

'MADDY WAS ABDUCTED BY ALIENS' New Police Theory

by Our Man In Portugal **AL GARVE**

POLICE investigating the disappearance 114 days ago of 4-year-old Madeleine McCann are now working on the theory that the missing toddler may have been taken by aliens.

Police have told Portuguese reporters that on the night of Maddy's disappearance a mysterious "bright light" appeared in the sky over the holiday complex where the little girl and her family were staying.

Full story and pictures 2-24

THAT ALL PURPOSE CELEBRITY DRUGGIE PIECE IN FULL

by Our Showbiz Staff **Phil Nostrils**

LAST NIGHT friends of Amy/Pete/Kate/Lindsay were concerned as the troubled singer/model/actress dramatically booked themselves back/took themselves out of rehab.

Looking pasty, thin and tired, Amy/Pete/Kate/Lindsay flicked a V sign at reporters before going in/coming out of a nightclub at three o'clock in the morning.

Said friends of Amy/Pete/Kate/Lindsay, "she/he is trying hard to get their life back together but the pressures of the business have taken their toll."

Other friends fear that Amy/Pete/Kate/Lindsay are struggling to avoid the bad influence of their husband/girlfriend/boyfriend/bloke she just met in the club.

"It's a tragedy waiting to happen," said yet another friend, "and we just pray that Amy/Pete/Kate/Lindsay doesn't go the way of Janis/Kurt/Sid/Judy/Marilyn/whoever/although it doesn't matter since no-one is going to get to the end of this piece anyway."

US GENERAL BLAMES BRITAIN FOR LOSING WAR

by Our US Military Correspondent **Buck Pass**

A TOP-RANKING US General last night pointed the finger of blame at the British Army for its failure to win the war in Vietnam.

"The limeys didn't do nearly enough in Vietnam. In fact, they weren't there at all."

He continued, "As a direct result of this feeble performance, we had no option but to evacuate Saigon and bomb Iran or was it Cambodia?"

What's So Wrong With Slugs?

Asks Max Hastings

THIS year's wet summer has had one very obvious consequence – a huge increase in the number of slugs in our gardens.

And to hear some people go on, you'd think that this was some kind of a disaster.

We're told that the slugs are eating all our precious flowers and vegetables and leaving our gardens looking like some sort of wasteland.

Keep Going

What nonsense! Agreed, the slug may not be one of the most handsome of our God's creatures – black and slippery, leaving a trail of slime wherever he goes.

He cannot be compared, I grant it, to a gorgeous, multi-coloured butterfly or a grouse.

And, of course, grouse have the great advantage that they can be shot and eaten – whereas few of us in our right mind would look forward to tucking into a plate of roast slug and chips!

Is This Right?

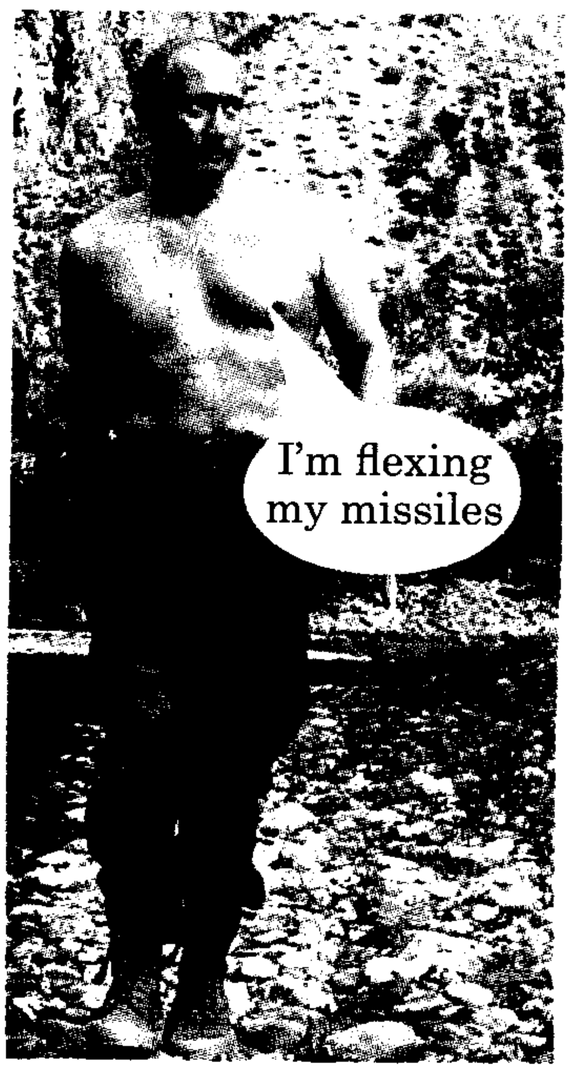
And no one, I admit, is going to be too happy to find all their prized nasturtiums eaten to the bone by these marauding pests.

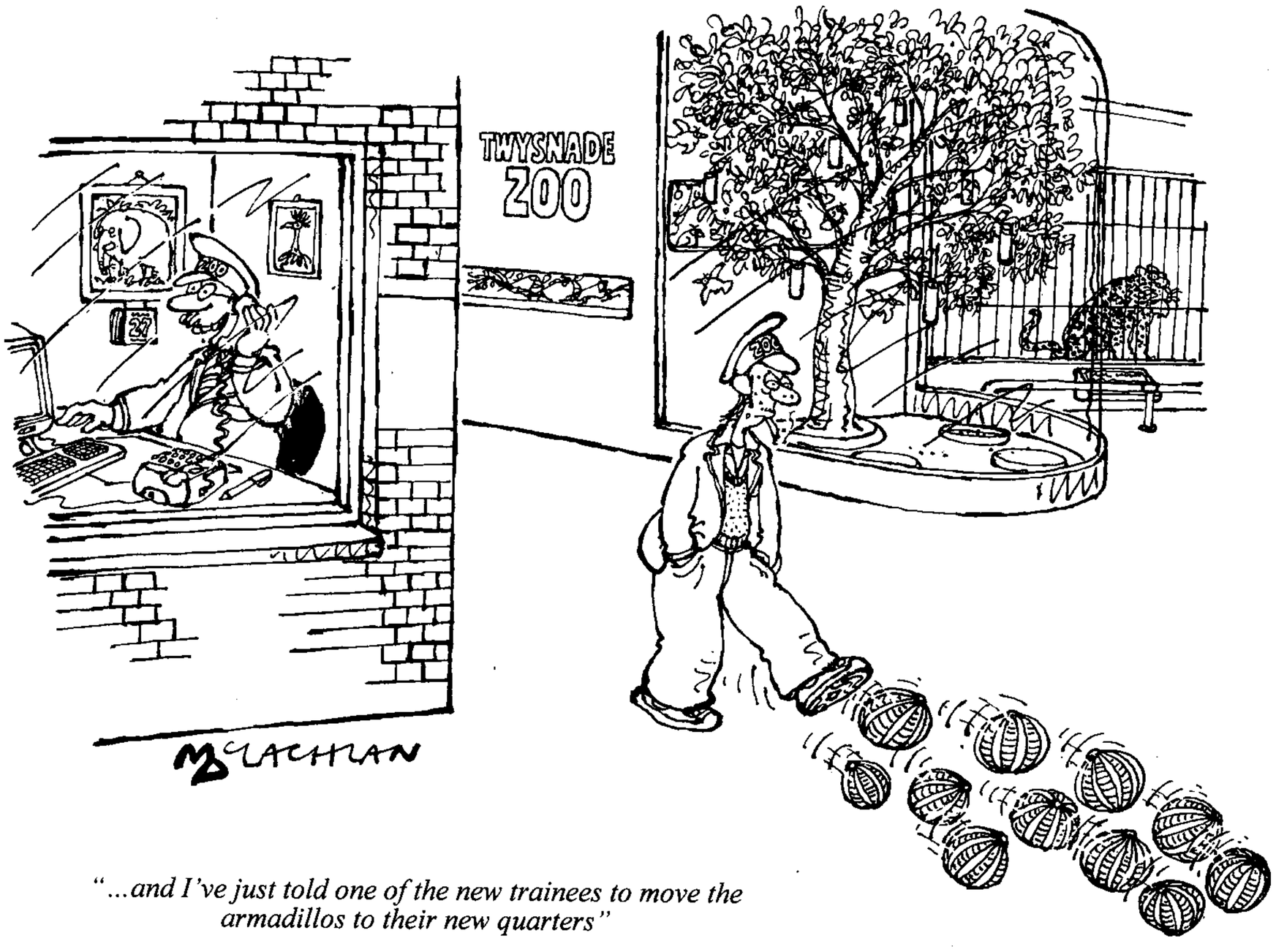
But to my mind there is one good reason above all others for singing the praises of Johnny Slug...

And that is because you're being paid a couple of grand by my old friend Paul Dacre to dash off something that will get Middle England talking!

© *Dacretrash Productions.*

IT'S THE COLD PHWOARR!





"...and I've just told one of the new trainees to move the armadillos to their new quarters"

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 3

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

(In his dacha in Kircaldygrad shortly to be renamed Kirgordygrad)

Comrades,

There follows a clarification of the situation regarding the new constitution which has been approved by the Supreme EU Council under the title of "This Is Not A Constitution".

Revisionists and subversive forces in our society, including right-wing reactionaries and traitorous members of the workers collectives, have falsely claimed that the People are in some way entitled to have their say on this matter.

They further allege that when the Party was confirmed in power in the free and fair elections held in 2005, the Party pledged that a people's plebiscite referendum would be held with regard to this one.

Whilst this may objectively be true, it must be noted that the promise to hold such a referendum was made personally by the discredited former leader and imperialist warmonger Comrade Blair, as part of his carefully orchestrated cult of personality.

In the Age of Change, such frivolous diversions from the task of reconstructing our country are no longer necessary nor relevant.

As Supreme Leader, with the full backing of the Party, I and I alone am competent to decide such matters on behalf of the People.

I would remind the traitors in our midst that it was not necessary for the People to be consulted when by universal acclamation I was nominated to succeed the now discredited Comrade Blair, after his prolonged period of mental breakdown.

In due course, once the new Constitution has been signed, I will issue instructions to Parliament to ratify it on behalf of the People.

The People will then at a later date be given an opportunity to show their renewed confidence in the Party and their wholehearted support for the Age of Change by voting in the one-party elections which I will arrange to be held at a suitable date in the future.

In the meantime, we have work to do. As you will have noticed, this directive has been issued from my holiday dacha in North Britain, where, in stark contrast to the conduct of the disgraced former leader and lickspittle Yankee running dog, I am spending my statutory summer rest period hard at work on behalf of the interests of the People rather than idly cavorting with degenerate capitalist deviationists amid the decadent fleshpots of Miami, Barbados and the Castello Fribi in Corsica.

I have issued instructions for all members of my Politburo to be back at their desks in London from 5.30am on September 1, so that "Team Brown" can resume the vital work of building the Age of Change.

Failure to comply with this instruction will result in internal exile for the guilty parties to the remote wilderness of Ulster or, even worse, the Department of Work and Pensions.

Yours fraternally,

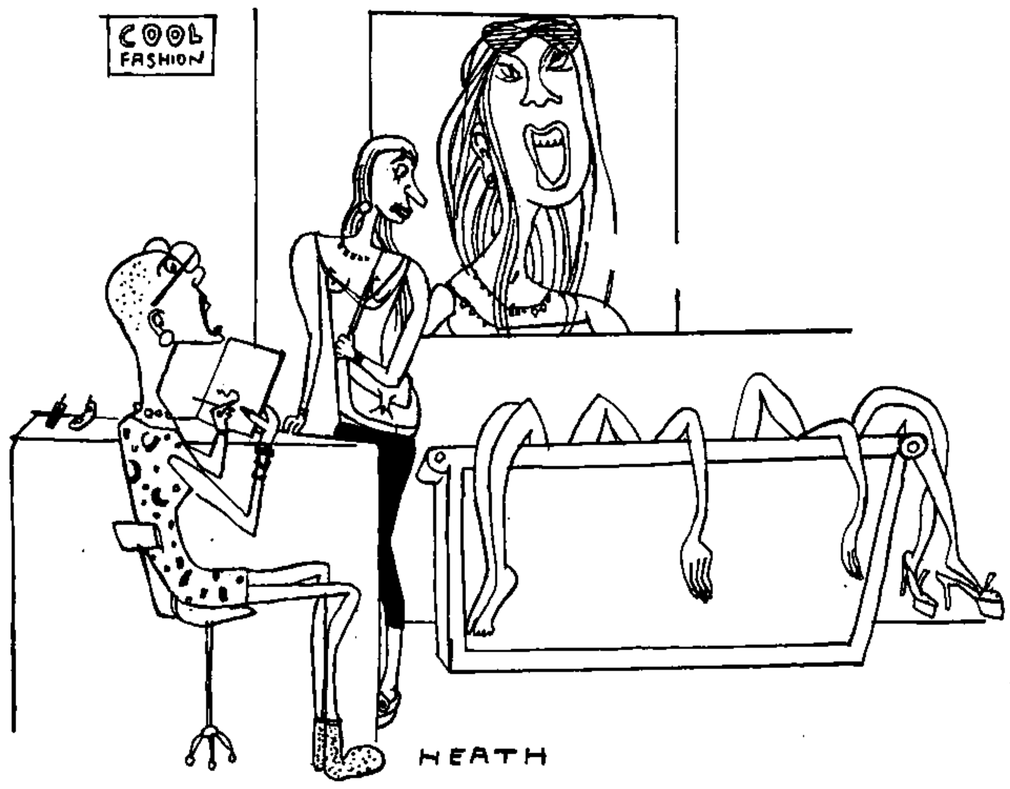
Gordon Brown

Supreme Leader

The Leader welcomed Comrade Merkel from the EU Region of Germany. She was guest of honour at the new National Stadium of Sport in Wembley. As a fraternal gesture, the British team allowed the guests to win the football game, with Comrade Robinson personally instructed by the leader to let in the two goals which were required for a satisfactory and friendly outcome!

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

HOORAH FOR JOHN REDWEIRD AND HIS BRILLIANT IDEAS!
BUT DAVE, WHY ARE WE SO KEEN ON SCRAPPING INHERITANCE TAX?
BECAUSE WE'VE GOT AN AWFUL LOT TO INHERIT!
SNOOTY TOWERS
OSBORNE & LARGE POSH WALLPAPER CHAPS
IN FACT THE ONLY THING YOU'RE NOT GOING TO INHERIT IS NUMBER 10!
BOO! DOWN WITH REDWEIRD AND HIS ROTTEN IDEAS!
WINK!
IT'S TIME FOR 'A-TACKS' ON HIM, EH, READERS!?



"Don't worry yourself about them, they're last year's models"

POLLY FILLER

on the new film 'The Nanny Diaries'

SO Hollywood would have us believe that nannies are victims of pushy, bullying harridan mothers who exploit them ruthlessly and expect them to look after their dysfunctional brats so that they can swan about enjoying themselves?!

Excuse me if I throw up into my popcorn rather than reach for the tissues and weep for the poor, underpaid wretches – or rather the greedy, lazy, hopeless, ungrateful half-wits that nannies really are.

I'm sorry but 'The Nanny Diaries' movie is a disgrace and Scarlett Johansson should be ashamed of herself – and that's just for pretending that nannies are slimmer than their employers and aren't lard buckets who spend the whole time hoovering up the entire contents of the fridge in the early hours before starting on the biscuit tin!

No, the real victims here are the stressed-out women bosses who have to slave their guts out to keep the Eastern European economy afloat, paying literally tens of pounds a month so that the stupid Mizrabella can phone Krudz and tell everyone how homesick she is!!?!

Now that would be a film I'd like to see, especially the scene where Mizrabella puts the plates from the dinner party in the washing machine and tries to press Simon's useless trousers in the Breville sandwich maker – while he's watching Extreme Mountain Cricket from Peru on Sky Plus Plus More Extra presented by James May and Rick Wakeman!

But of course Hollywood, the Big Lie Factory, has to tell it like it isn't!

But how do they answer this simple question then? If they want us all to go and see their rotten movie (and have dinner afterwards, obviously), who is going to look after the 1000-watt bundle of energy that is the toddler Charlie all night?

The stupid Nanny of course! Durr!!!

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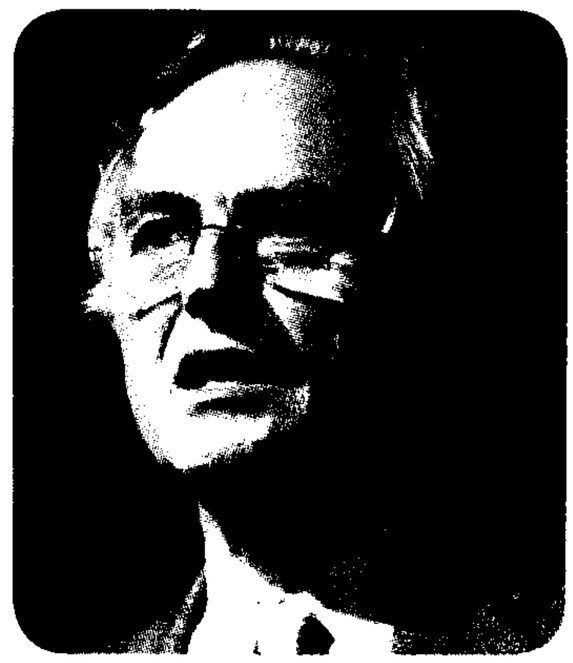
PRODUCT RECALL

WE regret that serious faults have been detected in our popular Chinese figurine 'Ming', which has necessitated its urgent withdrawal from the market. We have received a number of complaints about this model, in particular its high leaden content, which has rendered it unfit for purpose. Following tests suggesting that 'Ming' could cause the death of the Lib Dem party, we are planning to replace this obsolete product with a new and entirely safe version. Details to be announced shortly.

TV Highlights – What You Missed

ENEMIES OF REASON

Part 94



(Silly music. Elderly donnish figure wearing casual clothes and expression of deep concern gazes earnestly into camera)

Professor Richard Dawkins *(for it is he)*: It is frightening to think that in the 21st century there are millions of people all over the world who believe that they can change the future by a simple act involving a birthday cake.

(Cut to shot of family group clustered around Marks & Spencer chocolate cake covered in lit candles. Woman blows out candles while the rest of her family shout 'Go on, Mum – make a wish!" Close-up of woman with eyes closed, accomanied by sinister music. Cut to Dawkins, looking shocked and incredulous)

Dawkins *(interviewing woman)*: Mrs Simpkins, can I ask you what you think you were doing just now?

Mrs Simpkins: Well, I just made a wish while I was blowing out the candles, like I always do.

Dawkins: And you really thought that what you were wishing for would in some mysterious way come true?

Mrs Simpkins: Well, you never know, do you?

Dawkins: But how could blowing out candles on a cake have any influence over a future event? Isn't that just the most crude, primitive, infantile, unscientific superstition?

Mrs Simpkins: Well, if you're going to be like that, you're not going to have any of my cake.

Dawkins: As a control test, tell me what it is you wished for?

Family: Don't tell him, Mum, or it won't come true.

Dawkins *(to camera)*: So obviously the followers of this cult are under a vow of silence not to divulge the object of the "wish", to prevent any analysis of the outcome of their pathetic ritual, thus exposing it as an empty and futile act of self-deception for insecure neurotics.

(Cut to men in white coats looking through microscopes at pieces of birthday cake)

Dawkins: For the last five years, a team of researchers from the University of New Dworkins has been analysing over 2,000 case histories of the Birthday Wish cult. The leader of the team, Professor Hiram Moonbat, gave me his findings.

Bearded Scientist: In examining 2,522 samples, we could find little or no correlation between the expression of the "wish" by the anniversarial celebrant and any ultimate wished-for event.

Dawkins: Well, that proves it, doesn't it? The whole thing is rubbish, isn't it? And it is deeply alarming that, in the 21st century, the dark forces of unreason should still have so many millions of people in their grip, still indulging in...

Professor Moonbat *(in background)*: ... however, our researchers were somewhat hampered by the fact that no one would tell us what they had wished for, which rather invalidated...

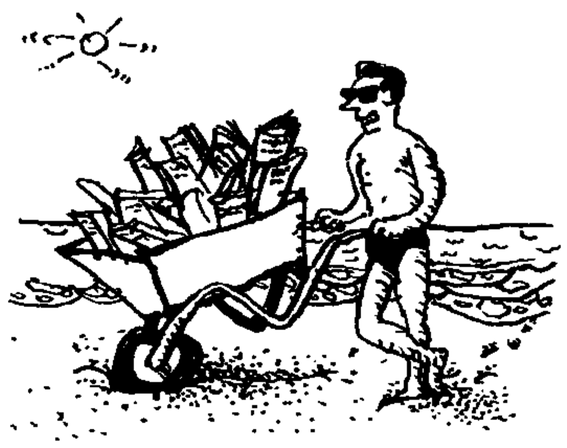
Dawkins *(intervening)*: So there we have it, Everyone in the world is mad except me, and very, very dangerous.

(Cut to shot of birthday cake exploding, destroying family home. Caption reads "Reconstruction")

NEXT WEEK: Professor Dawkins looks at the bizarre practice of shooting fish in a barrel, concluding that it is deeply unscientific and boring to watch.

SUMMER READING IN THE EYE

OUR PANEL of celebrity critics reveal what they'll be packing for that late-August foray to the beach...



Claire Tomalin
Biographer

Rose Tremain is a wonderful novelist, bold, adventurous and spry, whose home-made lemon curd and lavish hospitality are quite the equal of her dextrous tales of contemporary life. She tells me that her new novel, *The Road Home* (Chatto) is quite the best thing she has ever written; I can only agree. I also thought Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (Cape) a masterpiece. Wow!

Andrew Roberts
Historian

It is one of the great mysteries of modern political studies that the Hon. Huw Cladrach Hee, that titan of early twentieth century Welsh Conservatism, should have had to wait so long for his biographer, but in Professor Moses D'Ulle, author of *Hee: Master-Tactitian From The Marches* (Tender & Mainprice £49.99, available at discounted price of £48.97 from the *Spectator* bookclub) he has found the most magisterial of interpreters. From Hee's spectacular falling-out with Bonar Law over the name of the Tory assistant whip Sir Jolyon Farquharson (which Hee correctly insisted was pronounced 'Farson') to his involvement in the epochal intrigue surrounding the place-settings at Stanley Baldwin's farewell Cabinet dinner and his short-lived but influential role as assistant minister for Fisheries in the autumn of 1926, everything that the informed student of politics would expect to find is there. I also thought Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (Cape) a masterpiece.

Craig Raine
Poet and editor

What qualities does an intellectual of a modest and retiring nature seek in a modern novel? My own preference is for modish and well-publicised works written by personal friends, so I have no hesitation proclaiming Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (Cape) a masterpiece, and restating my opinion that anyone who believes this genius to be over-rated is simply acting out of professional envy.

Charles Spencer
Aristocrat and rake

Cripes! Who'd have thought that my old chum Teddy St Aubyn would turn out to be one of those literary chappies? It just goes to show. Anyway, his *Mother's Milk* (Picador), which I had my butler go and order from Mr Harrod, is just the ticket: all about this chap with an eye for the girls who does the dirty on his missus. Just the kind of thing that happens in real life, in fact. I also thought Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (Cape) a masterpiece.

Douglas Kennedy
Novelist

Summer is, of course, the best time to enmire yourself in the essential turgidity of other people's reality, which is why I'd like to nominate Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* as the essential summer read. In this book, Flaubert, who was French and lived in France, invented the modern novel. Note how the doctor's wife and her lover are actually living out the relationship later enjoyed by Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed and the skill with which Flaubert later turns her into a crack-addict and the wife of a Premiership footballer in the prelude to her grappling with existential ennui. I also thought Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (Cape) a masterpiece.

Jeanette Winterson
Novelist

I'd take Ali Smith anywhere. I'm not saying she's as good as me, mind, but a bookshelf just filled with my books would be pretty dull wouldn't it? Only joking! Nobody else seemed to notice the disguised lesbian sub-text of Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (Cape), but I did and thought it a masterpiece.

Jordan
Novelist and celebrity

Pete and me were shagging each other the other day when I saw this thing on the bedside table. 'What's that?' I asked him. 'It's Ian McEwan's new book' he said. 'What's it all about?' I asked. 'It's about this couple trying to shag each other' he said. 'F____g masterpiece if you ask me.'

D.J. Taylor
Novelist and critic

People are so *highbrow* about their summer reading choices. I'm not ashamed to say that I shall be taking *Four Chords Are For Faggots!* (Gremlin Press $39.99, available on import with free CD) Derek Gerbil's awesome study of Grand Funk Railroad's contribution to late twentieth-century American musicology. Oh, and Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (Cape), which I gather is a masterpiece.

Richard Dawkins
Professional atheist

If Christopher Hitchens' *God, You Suck!* (Rant and Dissemble £7.99) has a solitary drawback it is the restrained reasonableness of its tone. Nevertheless, only the most purblind bigot could fail to find something to ponder in the chapter entitled 'String those religious believers up, it's the only language they understand'. I gather that I should also recommend Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach* (Cape), which apparently is a masterpiece.

Celeb

TRAVELLING THROUGH HEATHROW IS HELL THESE DAYS...
TOTAL NIGHTMARE.
LIMITING AIR PASSENGERS TO ONE PIECE OF HAND LUGGAGE ONLY? COMPLETE AND UTTER MADNESS..!
DEPARTURES
IT INCONVENIENCES EVERYONE INVOLVED.
AND IT HASN'T BEEN GOOD FOR SECURITY AT ALL...
FAR FROM IT.
YOU CAN SEE HOW FED UP OUR SECURITY ARE. LOOK.
THEY HAVE TO FLY EVERYWHERE WITH US NOW TO CARRY ALL OUR HAND LUGGAGE...

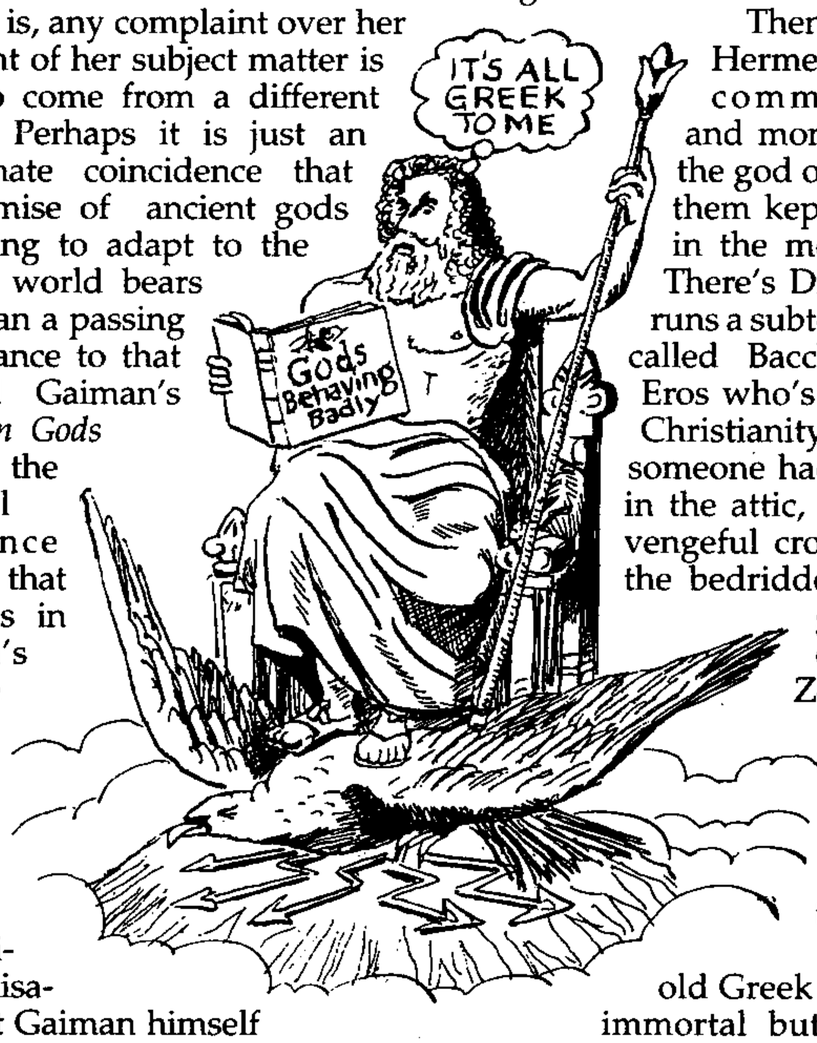
Literary Review

Ancient & modem

Gods Behaving Badly
Marie Phillips
(Jonathan Cape, £12.99)

IF THE law of blasphemy should be extended to non-Christian religions, as the beknighted Sir Salman Rushdie's critics have long argued, then Marie Phillips might well face prosecution for this disgraceful farrago of scandal, odium and contempt for the gods of ancient Greece.

As it is, any complaint over her treatment of her subject matter is likely to come from a different quarter. Perhaps it is just an unfortunate coincidence that her premise of ancient gods attempting to adapt to the modern world bears more than a passing resemblance to that of Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (2002), the principal difference being that the gods in Gaiman's book are mostly Norse gods rather than those of classical civilisation. But Gaiman himself isn't entirely in the clear: he had to change his book to avoid too obvious a comparison with an earlier treatment of the same premise in *Eight Days of Luke* by Diana Wynne Jones (1975).



Then again, raiding the myth-kitty is really nothing new. Rushdie himself grabbed more than his fair share with his modern take on the Orpheus and Eurydice myth in his poptastic stinker *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) and, lo and behold, the same old rave from the grave is resuscitated yet again in *Gods Behaving Badly*. No wonder Ms Phillips's novel has made such a splash in the rose-tinted world of publishers' hype: there's nothing the book trade likes better than something it can safely pigeonhole as "the new" something-old (as in "Zeus is the new Wotan" perhaps), and how "utterly original" (as the blurb has it) is that? Well, let's have a look.

There being nothing new under the sun, Apollo is still the god in charge of it, when not chasing mortal females or incestuously rogering his half-sister Aphrodite, the goddess of love, whose day job is running a phone sex line. Apollo's other sister, Artemis, the goddess of chastity and hunting, spends her time walking humans' dogs on the heath and tut-tutting about her siblings' antics.

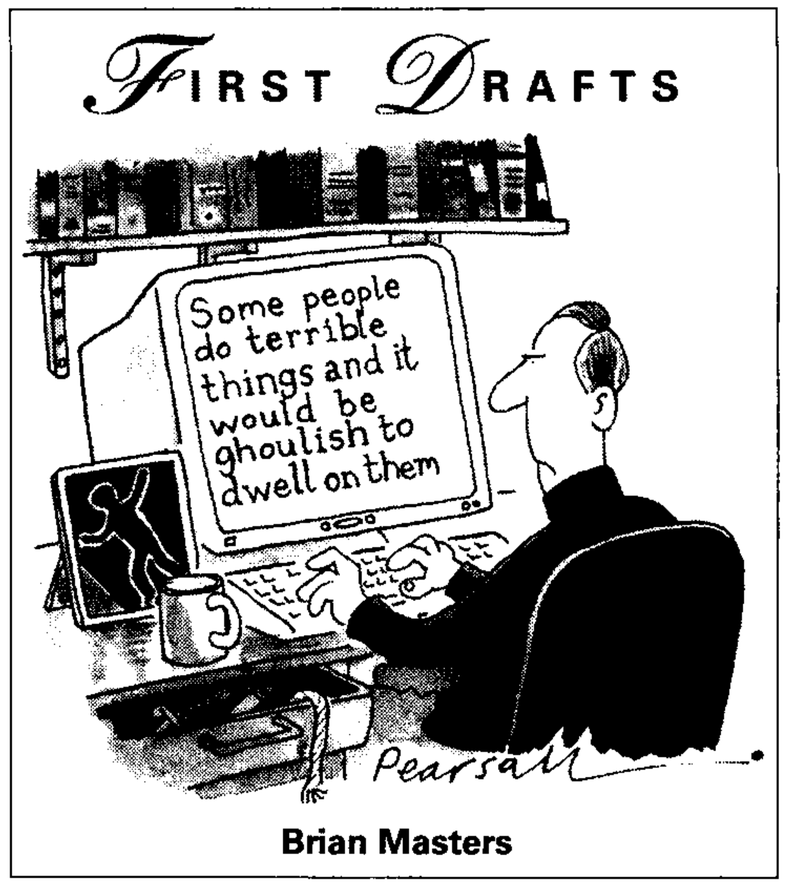
Then there's Hermes, the god of communications and money, and Ares the god of war, both of them kept pretty busy in the modern world. There's Dionysus, who runs a subterranean club called Bacchanalia, and Eros who's converted to Christianity (well, someone had to); and up in the attic, the morosely vengeful crone Hera and the bedridden semi-gaga grand daddy of them all, Zeus, just itching to clamber up on to the roof and hurl one last thunderbolt.

All these old Greek gods are still immortal but have sadly reduced powers, which is why they've downshifted from Mount Olympus to a ramshackle old house in, er, Hampstead. What with their bickering and bitching and the way they always act in character, the whole set up is just like a cosy old sit-com. There are only so many times you need to be reminded who's who in the classical pantheon and the one-dimensionality of their characters makes the dialogue rather repetitive. But even so, if the book had not been so relentlessly hyped in advance, this would all have seemed quite amusingly clever.

And it might have been relieved from one-joke wonderhood if the imaginative possibilities of the gods' interaction with humans were more fully explored. But apart from a few walk-ons, the only human element in the story concerns the rather drippy couple who replay the roles of Orpheus and Eurydice. Neil is a structural engineer, and Alice is a champion Scrabble player with a degree in linguistics who, conveniently for the plot, works as a humble cleaner in the gods' house. When she dies (struck by a thunderbolt from Zeus after refusing Apollo's advances) and goes to the underworld, Neil gets to play the hero and rescue her. The realms of Hades are reached by a ghost train which departs from a mysterious "extra" platform at Angel tube station (sound familiar?), and among the ordeals they face is a three-headed dog (Cerberus), which Harry Potter fans will recognise from the description given by JK Rowling of the mythical beast she "sourced" from Virgil's Aeneid. With the help of another goddess, Styx, whose description as a goth wraith makes her a dead ringer for Morticia Addams, the diffident Neil saves the day (literally, the sun had gone out in a fit of Apollonian pique) and restores his beloved Alice to the land of the living. Ah, bless!

The gods have indeed smiled on Marie Phillips, the gods in question being publishing supremo Dan Franklin of Cape, who apparently made her an offer of fifty grand over the phone, and before that the former head buyer at Waterstones who "discovered" her toiling in an obscure (ie independent) bookshop. If the product doesn't quite live up to the inflated claims made for it by other people, well, when does it ever? The fault is not really Phillips's.

So if there be carping, as there will, let her carpe diem.



Brian Masters

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ "IT IS a pity that someone didn't have the nerve," said Jane Shilling in her Sunday Telegraph review of Joyce Carol Oates's 582-page The Gravedigger's Daughter, "to suggest to [her] that her book would be greatly improved by cutting it to half its size."

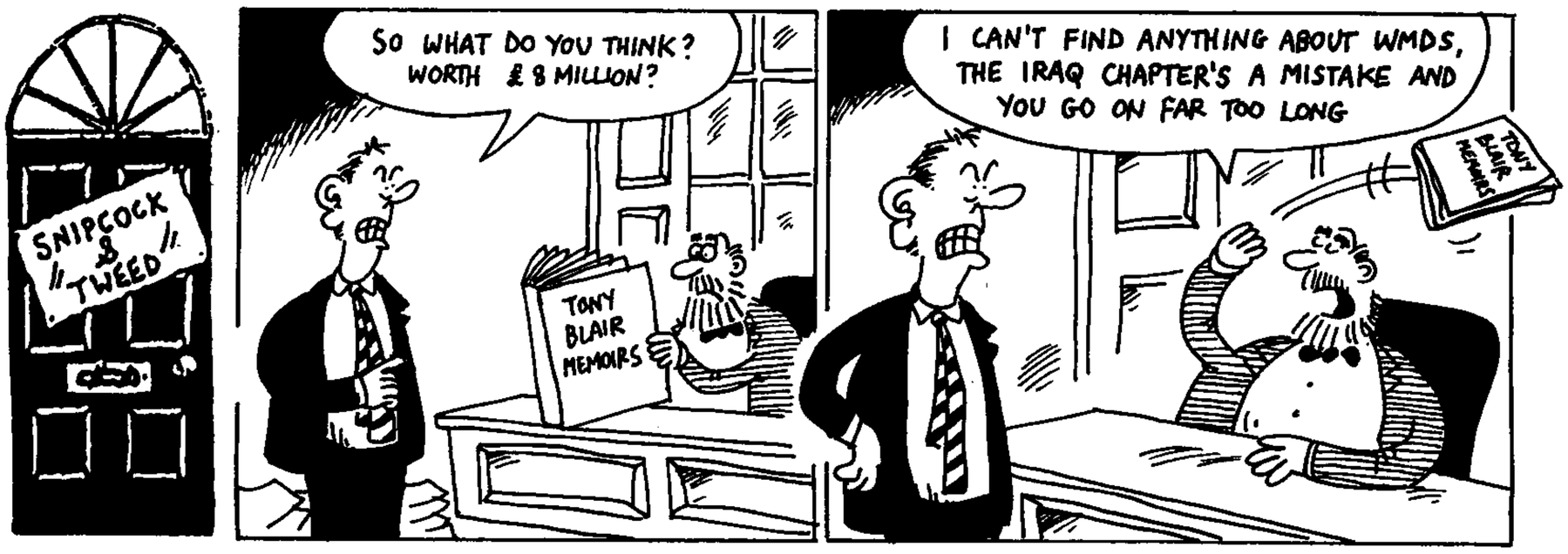
The complaint was echoed in other reviews of Oates, but it's also part of a pattern this year where literary fiction from HarperCollins imprints is concerned – ridiculously long books, baffled critics. David Flusfeder's The Pagan House (400pp)? "Material here for about four novels… and he seems to have tried to write them all at once," moaned the Guardian. Nicola Barker's Booker-longlisted Darkmans (840pp)? "Brilliant but exhausting: take a month off work and read it with herbal sedatives," advised the Observer. Lionel Shriver's The Post Birthday World (600pp)? Generally thought obese, but also criticised for lousy dialogue, characters and structure; Rachel Cooke was mystified that no editor had "stepped in to save Shriver from herself".

But it seems that at HarperCollins, even though halving the size of books would fit with the Murdoch outpost's commitment to saving the planet, no one ever does. Is there an editor in the house?

■ THE reputation of Ian McEwan's Saturday was somewhat dented by critics' attacks on the "Matthew Arnold scene" (a nasty intruder in the hero's house oddly pacified by a reading of "Dover Beach"), and the backlash against his tiny Booker favourite On Chesil Beach has already begun.

So far, though, Atonement has seemed unassailable. But the release of the film adaptation next month, which will boost the book's sales, will also focus attention on a question posed by only a few of the book's reviewers: would a 13-year-old upper class girl in 1935 really understand the word "cunt"?

The entire plot of the novel depends on her doing so: because Briony reads the letter that contains the word from Robbie to her sister Cecilia (a fantasy – "in my dreams I kiss your sweet wet cunt" – disastrously put in the envelope meant to contain an apology), she believes him a sex maniac and soon falsely claims she has seen him raping 15-year-old Lola; hence he goes to jail, hence he and Cecilia are heart-rendingly not married before he goes to fight in France, hence Briony never loses her guilt.


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK? WORTH £8 MILLION?
TONY BLAIR MEMOIRS
I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING ABOUT WMDS, THE IRAQ CHAPTER'S A MISTAKE AND YOU GO ON FAR TOO LONG
TONY BLAIR MEMOIRS

The film at once emphasises the obscenity's key status – its individual typed letters twice dominate the screen – and strips away McEwan's efforts in the novel to show why Briony knows what it refers to. Although she has never read or heard it, "the context helped, but more than that, the word was at one with the meaning, and was almost onomatopoeic. The smooth-hollowed, partly enclosed forms of its first three letters were as clear as a set of anatomical drawings." A 13-year-old with suspiciously McEwan-ish thought processes, no? And even if you give the author the benefit of the doubt, isn't it a rather flimsy basis for such a critical scene? We shall see.

■ ACCORDING to Penguin, the debut novel from Scottish writer Janet Paisley, *White Rose Rebel*, is the product of "extensive research".

Maybe so, but who was the researcher?

A decade ago Maggie Craig took a break from commercial fiction to write *Damn Rebel Bitches*, a non-fiction book on women who were in league with Bonnie Prince Charlie, particularly Lady Anne Mackintosh, now the heroine of Paisley's book.

Craig alleges that Paisley's book is merely a fictionalised rewrite of her own, and that Paisley has used material given to her by Craig on the understanding that it was for a film screenplay. In a recent *Sunday Times* interview, Paisley – previously an obscure poet and teacher – admitted that the film failed to gain enough funding, but that it had always been her intention to write it up as a novel. Had Craig known this, would she have been so happy to co-operate?

Penguin, however, is standing robustly by its author. Will battle commence?

'Bookworm'

AD NAUSEAM

THE least surprising Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) adjudication of the last fortnight was against a national press ad for the make-up giant Clarins.

Clarins scientists, the ad said, had "discovered" a link between "exposure to artificial electromagnetic waves and accelerated skin ageing". With remarkable good fortune, it also just happened to have devised a cure: Expertise 3P (Poly Pollution Protection).

This magnificent elixir contained "exceptional plant extracts with super-adapting powers against all types of pollution: Thermus Thermophillus from the ocean and Rhodiola Rosea from Siberia. Together with free radical fighters, White Tea and Succory Dock-Cress, they form an advanced anti-pollution complex."

What sounded like a load of cobblers turned out to be precisely that. And yet, because the ASA works reactively, investigating after the ad has run, Clarins was able to make its preposterous claims.

In recent years the cosmetics industry has become more and more brazen in its use of cod-science and manipulative imagery to sell the age-old promise of eternal youth – just last month L'Oréal was rapped for putting false eyelashes on Penelope Cruz to flog mascara. This is advertising that plays on fears and insecurities. Isn't is about time all cosmetics ads were substantiated *before* being run?

"A LITTLE Lenor makes a big difference," trumpets the latest campaign for the fabric conditioner. It claims that using a concentrated version will "take 14,000 lorry loads off the road" and save on "70 percent of packaging", while offering "fascinating waste reduction tips and advice".

To that end the company drafted in designer Allegra Hicks as a spokeswoman to offer readers of the *Independent on Sunday* her top eco-tips. Chief among them? "I've loved vintage clothes since I was a teenager… The best vintage shopping is in Buenos Aires, where I got this amazing 1960s coat in a wonderful honey-colour."

LAST month saw the launch of a campaign for BA's home check-in service, with half-page newspaper ads depicting an open suitcase, its contents scattered far and wide.

With brilliant timing, the same period also saw the company drafting in extra staff to clear a backlog of 20,000 items of lost luggage, and a report from the Association of European Airlines naming BA as the worst-performing airline in Europe when it came to losing customers' possessions.

VINNIE JONES, goonish footballer turned doltish actor, is the face of RAC Direct Insurance's latest press advertising campaign. Above a photo of Vinnie at the wheel comes the copyline: "With RAC car insurance you get breakdown included, lock, stock and barrel." *Geddit?*

Yet RAC Direct has apparently forgotten why Jones is indeed associated with cars in the public mind. In *Gone in 60 Seconds* he played a car-jacker who has to help Nicolas Cage steal 50 vehicles in one night. And, in the only memorable scene from *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, he repeatedly slams a car door against a man's head.

Does the RAC expect Vinnie's presence to reassure potential customers or scare them out of their wits?

IT'S presumably helpful for an insurance company to be able to see into the future, so well done Saga Motor Insurance.

The company is currently advertising 97 percent customer satisfaction, as found in the "Saga Customer Satisfaction Survey, carried out between September and December 2007". *Whoops!*

LUVVIES

"I adored him and so did David [Hemmings]. There was a line he wanted me to say in a particular inflection, and after we'd done 13 takes, he took me aside and said: 'Peter, I know you wish to show the world what a fine actor you are, and you must wonder why I want you to say the line that way.' Then he took me in his arms and said, 'But believe in me, trust me, I am not God, but I am Michelangelo Antonioni!' At that moment, I thought: 'I'd walk through fire for you.'"

PETER BOWLES, *Submitted by James Ward.*

"It is great to be with a film crew. Wonderful to have that romantic gypsy existence, to arrive in some desolate part of a foreign country with 200 guy and girls, truck and vans, and set up your circus, all focused on trying to tell this little tiny snippet of a story. That focus on a film set when everything is ready, it's religious, honest to God."

LIAM NEESON, *Submitted by Elaine Darkin.*

Pseuds Corner

For all Nash's exciting newness, her observations can be as prosaic as they are fresh. Indeed, her genius is sometimes accidental. 'This is my body,' she lilts on 'Mouthwash', like some female Jesus, offering herself up for consumption.

KITTY EMPIRE reviewing Kate Nash's album 'Made of Bricks', *Observer*

I think Bat Lashes are beyond a trend or fashion band. Khan has an ancient power; like Bjork or Patti Smith, she is part shamanistic.

***Dazed and Confused* magazine publisher JEFFERSON HACK, quoted on *Guardian* website**

Like Supremacy, Ultimatum moves at an insanely hectic pace and its stunningly edited headlong pursuits and brutal fights – in which every second-long, hand-held shot is like a tile in a giant mosaic or a pointillist dot in a Seurat painting – often leave you unable to breathe.

JOHN PATTERSON interviewing The Bourne Ultimatum director Paul Greengrass, *Guardian*

Tony's compartmentalised psyche – crosscutting between mob business, family life and the transcendence he sought variously in Canada geese, peyote visions, or re-enactments of World War II on the History Channel – provided a centre so sprawling it could be mistaken for the whole. The mere sight of him padding yet again in white bathrobe toward the refrigerator evoked a dishevelled Wotan worthy of a show whose capacity to extend and savor its transitions could seem Wagnerian.

GEOFFREY O'BRIEN on The Sopranos, *New York Review of Books*

The very first time I met Bono, in 1989, he handed me his first newborn child to hold and I sat with her for an hour. I love Bono and I saw this baby as the holy child of the master.

HELENA CHRISTIANSEN, *Grazia*

By the time 'This House Is a Circus's manic skat-rap is bursting from Turner's lips, there are bouncers peeling the Old Trafford crowd from the clouds. As the Monkeys rattle into 'Teddy Picker' they aren't wrestling this gig from the brink, they're stitching concrete wings to its back and sending it soaring to God to brag. 'Mardy Bum' and 'Fake Tales of San Francisco' are sung like the Lord's Prayer by the hoards clamouring at St Peter's gates.

ALEX MILLER
Review of Arctic Monkeys gig, *New Musical Express*

Following extensive research, we discovered The Dandy readers were struggling to schedule a weekly comic into their hectic lives. They just didn't have enough time. They're too busy gaming, surfing the net or watching TV, movies and DVDs. They still enjoyed The Dandy, but if they were going to buy it themselves they expected more than just 'a comic my dad used to read.' They required a guide, packed with the stuff kids need to know to stay in the loop – a lifestyle magazine attuned to their hectic lives, featuring all the latest trends, must-haves, must-sees and must-dos. They made us promise to retain comics, but suggested we make our characters cheekier, edgier and more extreme.

Dandy editor CRAIG GRAHAM, *BBC website*

CONTRIBUTORS: Wallace Magee, Julia Murphy, Kate Sandars, Rachael Turner, Jim Cranshaw, Michael Charalambous, Mark Ynys-Mon.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

CARE OF THE ELDERLY

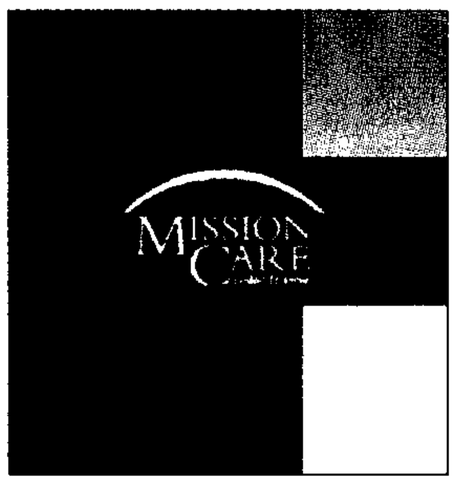
Sins of omission?

MISSION CARE, a Bromley-based charity, boasts that its homes for the elderly are run on the "principle of love, care and support" with "a unique opportunity to demonstrate and express the love of Jesus Christ to some of society's most vulnerable people". "Unique" indeed.

In May Linda Wright complained that her 85-year-old mother, Dorothy Richardson, had nearly died from "pre-terminal very severe pneumonia and septic shock" while at Homefield, one of the charity's six care homes. Mrs Wright says it was only at her insistence that an ambulance was called when she found her mother semi-conscious and barely breathing.

Mrs Richardson's condition had been complicated by dehydration and the hospital had not expected her to survive. But after resuscitation and intensive care she recovered and now lives at home again with her daughter.

Mission Care investigated Mrs Wright's complaint and found it "not proven". But the two-page inquiry report appears to rely on written notes and records, with no attempt to interview anyone involved, let alone Mrs Wright. As she told the *Eye*: "I have no doubt that had I not visited when I did, she would have died."



Mrs Wright has been trying since June to get hold of her mother's records from Mission Care and Bromley council, and has been told by Mission Care she has to pay for them. She has now joined the Community Care Protection group whose campaign, Breaking the Silence, is protesting about Homefield, which cares for 44 patients with dementia, and another Mission Care establishment, Elmwood, a 67-bed residential home nearby. Last month campaigners took their concerns to Bromley council which has given the charity a multi-million pound contract to provide nursing and intermediate care.

Community Care Protection is concerned that even though there have been serious complaints of neglect and a series of critical inspection reports on the two homes over the past two years, they are still failing to meet basic standards of care such as keeping patients properly hydrated. Their campaign coincided last week with a Commons report which found that one in five care homes falls short on minimum standards and that vulnerable residents are not protected by inspection and complaints procedures.

Problems at Homefield and Elmwood surfaced publicly in 2006. Gaynor Whitley had to give up her job in the civil service and remove her mother, Moira Lyons, 88, from Homefield in February that year after twice finding injuries she believes were inflicted by other residents. Mrs Whitley told the *Eye*: "It was quite clear to us that there was an acute lack of supervision." Last year the *Bromley Times* reported similar complaints from two other families who claimed their relatives had been assaulted by other residents or subjected to inhumane treatment by being belted into their chairs.

Certainly by June last year the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) was concerned about the use of lap belts, noting that one resident had been restrained by a belt for eight hours. There were also concerns about the failure to draw up proper care plans for each resident, as well as worries about staff levels and qualifications.

In February this year, inspectors found six high-dependency residents unsupervised in one small room while staff were busy elsewhere. The latest inspection report from June shows that while the home had made some improvements, such as less use of restraint belts, it had still not met 17 of the 25 national minimum standards. It was again given extra time to comply. Although it was a home for those with dementia, staff spoken to by inspectors "showed only limited knowledge in relation to dementia". At peak times, particularly meal times, there were not enough staff to deal with residents' care needs; the person in charge of the home at the time of inspection was also one of the two qualified staff on duty; care plans were still not being drawn up properly so it was difficult to monitor what fluids some residents had taken in a 24-hour period.

Elmwood, meanwhile, has been subject to a series of complaints and critical reports ever since it opened in 2005. In 2006 work experience teenagers revealed neglect and poor treatment of two elderly women there, and in June that year the CSCI reported that the home had received 19 complaints in its first six months – one of which was fully substantiated and 11 partially so. Five came from the London Ambulance Service, and five led to adult abuse investigations. Three months later there were still concerns that a new acting manager had been "unable to expunge some of the isolated poor basic care practice".

In March of this year the home was criticised for wrongly accepting a patient with violent dementia. Although there had been many improvements, particularly in staff training, concerns remained that care plans were still not being properly drawn up or adhered to. Records for some residents, including those with hydration problems, appeared to show no fluid intake after six in the evening.

Sue Sulis, of the Community Care Protection group, said: "Our concerns are that adult protection procedures have not been followed and that basic minimum standards are still not being met, despite numerous inspections. Mission Care has been able to investigate itself and tends to find itself innocent of any fault – without proper interviews and without disclosing any documents or records."

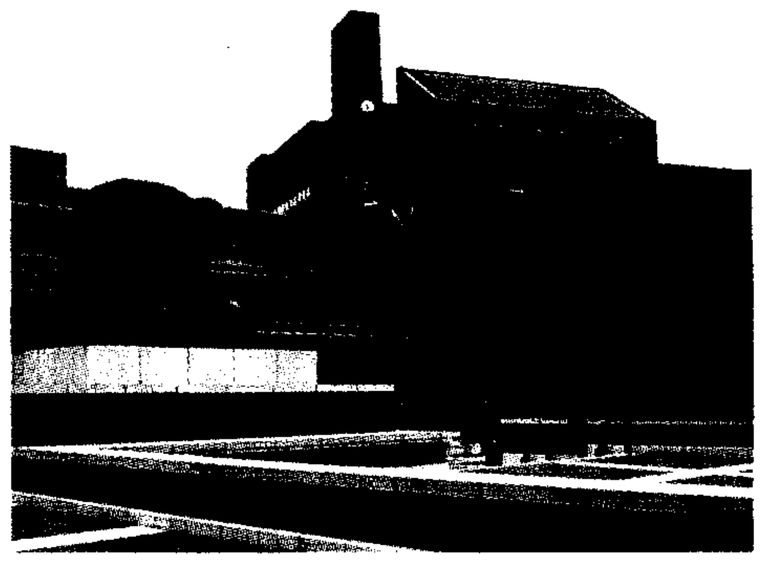
Colin Bloom, chief executive of Mission Care, said he did not understand the *Eye*'s interest. "We are a small charity working in a high-risk and difficult area of care, not some huge profit-making company. We are not denying that we have had some difficulties and problems in the past and that we have made mistakes, but we have worked hard and are now proud of the care we provide.

"It would be unfair to portray us in a poor light when our care is now among the best, our homes full and most of our clients very happy with the service we provide."

Mr Bloom claimed it was unfair of the *Eye* to rely on inspection reports and not see the homes for ourselves. We were welcome to look round day or night, he said. Last Tuesday the *Eye* tried to take him up on his offer, arriving at Homefield at 8.45am. Unfortunately we did not get past the front door. The manager said she had no instruction from Mr Bloom to let the *Eye* in and he could not be contacted as he was out of the country.

■ PS: More has emerged in the case of elderly residents who suffered mistreatment at Lynde House, run at the time by Chai "Diddums" Patel's Westminster Care Homes (*Eyes passim*). Disciplinary charges brought by the Nursing and Midwifery Council against manageress Sarah Johnson and matron Lyn Maggs have been adjourned as their lawyers seek a judicial review of the NMC case.

The pair face charges including failing to ensure residents were washed, fed and given fluids. *Eye* readers will recall that frail patients were left for hours in their own waste and suffered preventable falls and unexplained bruising. The lawyers say the NMC has no supporting documentary evidence, that it failed to obtain documentation and other material, failed to disclose all the material and that the proceedings should be stayed. The application won't go ahead before October with little chance of a disciplinary hearing before next year – six years after complaints were first made.



BRITISH LIBRARY LAND

Flat's all, folks

PLANS to flog off a plot of publicly-owned land behind the British Library on London's Euston Road have attracted a gold rush of developers.

Back in 1988 the planned library was reduced in size by a third to save costs; and the Treasury agreed that the now "surplus" land at the rear of the site could be sold. However, until now it has remained in public hands, part owned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and partly by the British Library itself. The library has agreed to swap plots to make a saleable parcel of land.

A DCMS spokesperson told the *Eye* that the land, currently home to the temporary offices for works at neighbouring St Pancras station, would be sold "to secure best value for taxpayers' money. We are in the early stages of the sale process and have sought expressions of interest which are being evaluated at the moment."

As of June this year, the land was valued in the department's asset registers at £26.6m, but *Estates Gazette* recently reported that the 3.6 acre site was expected to fetch £45m, and when bids closed on 2 August, 150 developers had put their hands up.

Campaigners in Camden, including St Pancras MP Frank Dobson, want the site to be used for much-needed social housing or public leisure. A planning brief from Camden in 2003 said the council was looking for "mixed use" of the site and listed some of the things it wanted to see in the area. These included amenities for young people, indoor sports, a community centre or a tourist information point – any of which would eat into the profits of developers determined to shoehorn as many expensive flats into the area as possible. Certainly none of them appears in the imagined development featured in the sales brochure for the land, which describes in detail a residential, commercial and retail development awash with cafes and bars.

DCMS told the *Eye*: "Decisions on the future use of the site are quite properly for elected local councillors. This is not something that DCMS could – or should – become involved in." Surely if they sell to a high-end housing developer, as expected, that *will* decide the future of the site.

Number crunchings

30% ■ Reduction in carbon footprint at Ellesmere Port plant which Vauxhall boasts about in advertising

30% ■ Reduction in staff at Ellesmere Port plant which Vauxhall doesn't boast about in advertising

PPS GROUP

It's a consultation

EMBARRASSING times for the wily PR agency behind most of Britain's major developers – PPS Group.

Exposed by a recent Channel 4 *Dispatches* for bugging private council meetings, forging letters from residents in support of developers and disguising themselves as students to help builder St George obtain planning permission for more than 700 homes in Fulham, PPS Group's other interests are now also under intense scrutiny.

Take the group's work for developer Mountgrange, which wants to flatten homes and heritage sites at the Canongate, on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. Much of the impetus behind the development comes from the favourable responses obtained by PPS during a public consultation on the project in 2005. It mustered just 219 responses but – surprise, surprise – more than 180 of those were pro-development. Since PPS's reputation is now in tatters, concerned locals are calling for the consultation to be done again.

Self-proclaimed "crisis management" gurus PPS also advised Countryside Properties (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*) who crafted a "community newsletter" when they planned to build 650 homes on a former asbestos factory in Rochdale. The glossy brochure was found to be in breach of the Advertising Standards Authority code in the areas of "honesty", "truthfulness" and "substantiation".

Another heavily contaminated site is the former Akzo chemical factory in Littleborough. Woodford Group plc, the latest builder to get their hands on it, have, like Countryside, begun to issue a "community newsletter" to locals who might be suspicious. Woodford and PPS have such a close relationship that members of the public who ring Woodford's "information line" find themselves talking to PPS's northern HQ in Manchester.

As its website states: "Since 1990, PPS has been securing demonstrable support for planning applications from those that might not normally bother to express their views." So much so that if you try to express your view to the developer in Littleborough, you'll get PPS. And even if you've never expressed any view at all on a development in Fulham, you may find PPS has already done it for you. Brilliant!

TRAINING

Walkers' workies

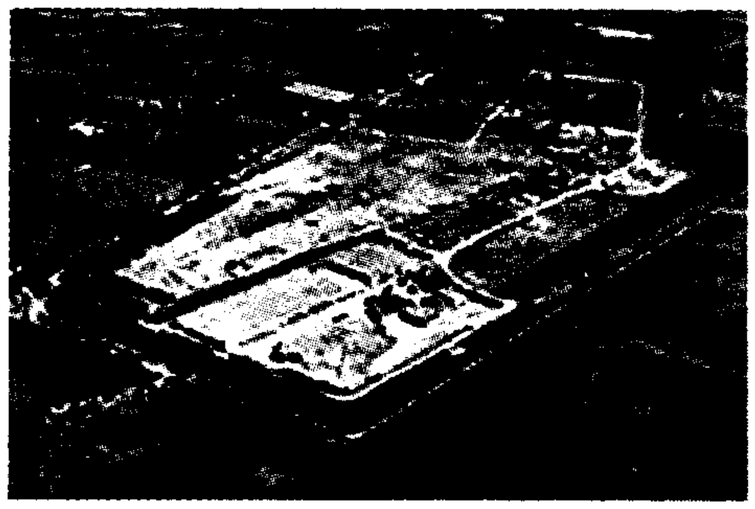
WHEN Ofsted inspectors visited the Walkers crisps factory in Peterlee, Co Durham, they discovered that a government-funded training scheme was using people on work experience to train employees in IT skills.

In 2004, the Learning and Skills Council named Walkers Snack Foods, part of snacks giant PepsiCo, an "exemplar" employer after the company opened a LearnDirect centre and enrolled 75 of the factory's 450 workers on courses such as numeracy and IT. Courses are also open to the local community.

But all is not well at the Walkers Learning Centre, which scored an "unsatisfactory" in almost every area that Ofsted inspectors judged when they visited in July. IT training at the centre had a success rate of just 13 percent. Inspectors found that staff did not have an "adequate understanding" of how to provide good training and provision was in any case "poor". The report noted that because of security measures on the company computer network, no one could actually download the LearnDirect teaching materials.

Ofsted also discovered that the factory's LearnDirect centre "relied" on unqualified people who were there on New Deal work experience placements "who are on hand to answer queries, mostly about computer use". Exemplary indeed!

NUCLEAR WASTE



Safety belted

THE Nuclear Decommissioning Agency (NDA) has announced that the US contractor Washington Group International is the preferred bidder for the five-year, £500m contract to run the Drigg nuclear waste dump in Cumbria (pictured).

The announcement comes just two months after the US firm was fined for "safety culture" problems in America.

In June, a Washington Group joint venture clearing nuclear pollution at the Idaho National Laboratory was fined $55,000 after inspectors found "severity level II violations". Instruments were found to be contaminated and there were "safety culture problems indicated by an employee's fear of retaliation for raising safety issues and the emphasis on production over safety".

The firm has in fact faced a series of fines this year because of poor practice at nuclear and other dangerous sites. In January, Washington Group had to pay $192,500 for accidents at the Department of Energy's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, a nuclear weapons lab. Three workers there had inhaled or ingested plutonium after brushing particles of it off their tools. Investigators found that staff had continued working with plutonium while emergency alarms sounded.

In the same month a Washington Group joint venture was fined $30,000 for dragging its feet over clean-ups at the Los Alamos nuclear site in New Mexico. Nor did it endear itself to the authorities while cleaning up a non-nuclear site. In the same month it was fined $27,600 for poor monitoring of its Oregon incinerator, which burns old mustard and nerve gas shells. The group had been similarly fined in 2005; and in 2004 it had to pay a $184,800 penalty for failures in destroying nerve gas.

Given this record, why did the British managers' union, Prospect, welcome the NDA's decision to sign up the Washington Group? Perhaps because the field for international nuclear clean-up contractors is so pisspoor.

Alongside nuclear work, Washington Group is a politically well-connected US engineering company with extensive contracts for "reconstruction" in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is owned by another American company, the military-oriented URS Corporation, whose board includes former NATO boss General Joseph W. Ralston.

The Washington Group won the Drigg bid in Cumbria as part of a joint venture with the British firm SERCO, which cemented its long-running links to Labour by appointing former government minister Lord Filkin and Labour's Baroness Ford to its board.

Atomic Kitten, Pt 94

THE break-up of British Nuclear Fuels, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority's clean-up contracts and the government's commitment to new nuclear power stations are creating a mass of work for lawyers – but not, it seems, at the London law firm Eversheds.

Indeed, grumbles from the firm have grown loud enough to reach the *Eye* – and they concern our old friend Barbara Judge (pictured), who was an Eversheds director.

The workaholic Judge, who among dozens of other jobs chairs the Atomic Energy Authority (AEA), keeps an office at the firm. The AEA even holds its London board meetings at Eversheds, although the AEA does not list Judge's connection with the firm on its website.

Complex nuclear contracts and regulatory issues generate a mountain of lucrative legal paperwork, and last year Eversheds lawyers formed "a specialist team to focus on the nuclear energy sector". However, the suits are deeply frustrated that Judge's continued presence in their offices is a hindrance, rather than a help in securing such work.

Conflict of interest rules linked to Judge's atomic role apparently keep getting in the way when Eversheds tries to grab some of the action.

FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **ARRIVA:** More on Arriva, which was recently awarded the CrossCountry rail franchise and criticised by a judge for giving "untrue" evidence in court (*Eye* 1190).

An *Eye* reader from Northern Ireland and his wife had pre-booked tickets for an Arriva Green Line coach from London to Luton to catch their flight home. When the coach arrived late it sailed straight past the waiting passengers, however. No other coach turned up, there was no Green Line phone number to ring for help, and after waiting nearly an hour the couple had to take a taxi. Arriva responded to the couple's request for a refund by explaining the coach had passed the waiting passengers because it was full when it began its journey. But where was the cheque from Arriva (annual turnover £1.7bn)? The customer service assistant explained: "I am sorry on this occasion we are unable to offer any reimbursement as we were not responsible for you having to take alternative transport."

■ **GURPAL VIRDI**: The police officer who won record damages from the Met over spurious claims that he sent race hate mail has just won an apology and £45,000 towards costs from the *Daily Mail*.

In April last year the *Mail* said an employment tribunal had awarded compensation to Mr Virdi (pictured) for racial discrimination. But it added that a later independent inquiry by South Wales police concluded that he was behind the race hate

campaign – which was nonsense: Virdi was fitted up by colleagues.

"We emphasise that we did not allege that Mr Virdi was guilty of sending racist hate mail and apologise for any distress caused to Mr Virdi and his family if a false impression was given," said the *Mail*.

Music to Virdi's ears, no doubt, given that the *Mail* was happy to be used by anonymous senior officers who had briefed against him.

HEALTH SPECIAL

MEDICINE BALLS

Paediatric alert

"THERE is now real concern and increasing evidence that the NHS is failing children." So says Alan Craft (pictured), a professor of child health in Newcastle, in a *BMJ* editorial (11 August 2007). This despite Labour's "National Service Framework for Children", belatedly launched in 2004 in response to the Bristol paediatric heart surgery scandal (first exposed in the *Eye* in 1992).

Alas, children don't vote and they tend not to take to the streets to complain about their care, so there was no additional money or specific targets for Labour's vision. Last year, the Healthcare Commission found that only 4 percent of trusts had made excellent progress in implementing the framework, and 21 percent rated good. Most progress was made in "improving the hospital environment" but there was still "a worrying potential for unsafe medical care" – ie surgeons trained to operate on adults were operating on children too, many on just a handful a year making their results statistically meaningless.

Recruitment into high risk, high litigation paediatric specialties remains a problem and the service trundles on with some hospitals lacking the staff to provide life support for children during the day and one in five unable to deal effectively with paediatric emergencies at night. The alternative, to close smaller units and merge services on fewer, bigger sites is politically unpalatable and they may still be unable to cope with the workload.

Good paediatric services are vital to the future of the NHS and without them the burden of chronic illness into adulthood is huge. The damage of passive smoking in pubs is negligible compared to the damage to a child of smoking during pregnancy. If you survive your small shrivelled placenta in utero, your risks of heart disease and premature death as an adult are greatly increased. M.D. has written on numerous occasions about the importance of fluoride for dental health, folic acid to prevent spina bifida and neonatal hearing tests to pick up deafness early, and yet the UK still has a lamentably poor record in preventative health for babies and children.

The UK also has one of the highest incidences of childhood diabetes and worst records of diabetic control; but the long term devastation this causes is beyond the scope of short-term political targets. Our detection and survival rates for childhood cancer are among the worst in Europe and we're 15th in the European league table for perinatal mortality.

For the NHS to survive, it needs to invest in keeping children healthy upstream to prevent a log jam later on. Programmes like SureStart and improvements in community child mental health services are starting to kick in, but good hospital treatment is being stifled by targets for adult surgery and waiting times, and the difficulties in setting a fair tariff for complex paediatric care that requires input from many specialties. In a market NHS, paediatric care will only flourish if it can turn a profit. At present, much of it is cheap, unsafe and done on the hoof by non-specialists. Gordon Brown and Health Secretary Alan Johnson need to refocus away from markets and back on to quality and safety.

M.D.

HEALTH VISITORS

Hounslow can you stoop?

HEALTH visitors in Hounslow are "absolutely sinking" under the pressure of work after their numbers halved – despite the west London borough's soaring birth rate.

In 2001 there were 37 health visitors in the borough, but today Hounslow has just 18. As a result, says the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association, the remaining staff are dealing with huge caseloads and teetering on the edge of "dangerous practice".

Staff are worried that there is an increased risk to children's health now that the health visitors are too overstretched to make even one visit to every home with a new-born baby. Nor does the area have any school nurses, despite government guidelines that there should be one for every secondary school and its nearby primaries.

The huge disparities in community health, as cash-strapped primary care trusts have cut back on preventative care over the past decade (*Eyes passim*), have at last been noticed at the Department of Health, however. A new review of health visiting by chief nursing officer (CNO) Christine Beasley notes that: "We were struck by the variation in the services offered to users, the level of resources and quality of leadership between regions and PCTs."

The CNO also found "frequent reports of reductions in the number of health visitors being trained"; and in some parts of the country "high levels of need, unfilled vacancies and large workloads" were reported, especially when trusts were faced with financial problems. So much for government claims that community health services can pick up the slack as the NHS cuts back on local hospital-based maternity services.

NHS IT

A fine mess

EVEN Labour's foundation trust hospitals, supposedly freed from NHS bureaucracy, can't escape the clutches of the National Programme for IT in the NHS. And according to a secret survey obtained by IT website *e-health insider*, it is costing them dear.

The trusts' responses revealed that, if they or any other hospital refuse to spend their already stretched budgets on systems provided through one of five centrally-negotiated regional monopoly contracts, they stand to be clobbered financially. This despite the fact that the core software for IT systems in 60 percent of the country's hospitals, iSoft's "Lorenzo", is years late. Meanwhile, the software developed by Cerner for the remaining 40 percent "really isn't usable" as it was developed "without listening to what end user wants". And that's from the national programme's biggest fan Richard Granger, head of the agency running it, Connecting for Health.

One trust reported being told that if it didn't take the currently unsatisfactory releases of software for its core system, it would have to pay the £20m that CfH claimed it would cost the local NHS. Another reluctant to buy electronic imaging software under the programme has been told it will be fined £3.5m.

Even when trusts do adopt the official software – much of which is paid for centrally by CfH – they think they're wasting their money. The survey revealed that "acute FTs [Foundation Trusts] reported the [national care record system] represents poor value (even though it comes at zero cost as part of the core) as a result of key gaps in functionality".

Unsurprisingly the programme remains stagnant as trusts resist buying hopelessly defective systems under contracts imposed four years ago by Granger, only to be met by bullying to take them. Granger leaves the scene of the crime in October, just as the Treasury concludes its latest plans for spending across government. Experts think it's not too late to ditch the central deals and start again by giving NHS trusts control over what they buy. Time for another super casino-type announcement from Gordon?

ISTCS

Independent daze

HE MIGHT have flexed his political muscle on casinos and cannabis, but will Gordon Brown now do anything about Tony Blair's half-baked public services policies? Evidence from the health service suggests not.

A recent report from free-market think tank Reform laments "a series of policy decisions that have put into question the government's policy of allowing private companies to compete for NHS-funded treatment". At issue is the pulling in recent weeks of a couple of deals under the second wave of the independent sector treatment programme for NHS operations and the cancellation of a third wave.

The decisions leave the sector far short of what supporters of private sector provision consider would be required for a viable source of Blair's much-loved competition in public services. Two years ago the then commercial director at the Department of Health, Ken Anderson, explained that "the size of the [independent] market should be at least 600,000 procedures a year to have four national providers and create healthy levels of competition on a national scale".

At current levels the "market" will be lucky to hit 200,000 procedures. Unable to compete on its own merits, it will carry on creaming off more routine operations under favourable contracts with which NHS trusts can't compete – continuing to hit local health services. If the independent sector treatment policy isn't going to be seen through, it would thus be better ditched altogether. But that would involve a real confrontation – not something Gordon Brown has ever been known to relish.

PATIENTS' FORUMS

Niggling complaints

WHEN it comes to raising concerns about the NHS, there is one set of rules for hospital trusts and another for the patient and health forums that monitor them.

After an emotional meeting that discussed the standards of care of the elderly at two Calderdale hospitals, Dr Robert Heys, then chair of the local patient and public involvement in health forum, was surprised to receive a complaint from the Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Trust which runs the hospitals.

The trust accused him of being disrespectful, aggressive and "downright rude" to a nurse who was answering questions about care. But the trust offered no evidence to support its allegations when they were referred to the Commission for Patient and Public involvement in Health (CPPIH). Indeed, the trust said it did not want to involve the nurse in the complaints process at all, and the CPPIH eventually ruled there was no case to answer. Yet Dr Heys, who had vigorously denied the allegations, had the matter hanging over him for nearly a year.

When he sought to complain about senior trust executives making unsubstantiated allegations about him, he got nowhere. Foundation hospitals are regulated by Monitor, and Dr Heys was told that Monitor will not investigate complaints from individuals. So much for the public accountability of NHS foundation trusts!

In the City

A PROMINENT London tax barrister and a motoring law specialist have been hit with a $75m default judgment by a California court after choosing not to defend themselves in a civil case involving the sale of "sham" tax shelters.

A Federal court in San Jose awarded the default judgment last September against Michael Sherry, a tax specialist who is also a member of the main Institute of Chartered Accountants' council, and solicitor Mio Sylvester, who heads the London office of motoringlawyers.com.

Sherry

Sylvester

Sherry has been involved in a number of high profile tax cases and is co-author of one of the leading tax bibles. Sylvester's law firm defends drivers under the banner "fighting for your driving license" with the mantra: "We never give an inch to the prosecution." The award was made to one-time dotcom entrepreneur Reese M. Jones, who sued Sherry and Sylvester as well as Deutsche Bank and others involved in the sale of the failed tax shelter scheme.

Sherry and Sylvester are described in court documents as shareholders of a company used as part of the scheme to generate capital tax losses claimed by Jones through a loan facility with the top German bank. Although registered in Delaware, America's homegrown tax haven, the company was called Ongar – it is believed after the former London underground station on the Central Line. Ongar is understood to have received a fee for participating in the paper loan transactions. Payments are also understood to have been made to Sherry and Sylvester. There are understood to have been several Ongar clones also named after underground stations, used for other scheme clients.

Jones used the scheme – called CARDS, short for Custom Adjustable Rate Debt Structure – three times between 2000 and 2002 to generate tax losses to reduce his tax bill. But in 2002 the Internal Revenue Service declared CARDS an illegal tax scheme and ineffective. The IRS held that the underlying loan transactions at the centre of CARDS were artificial and so any losses were not tax deductible.

Jones was one of dozens of rich businessmen who had been sold the CARDS scheme, generating millions of dollars in fees for the promoters and revenues for Deutsche Bank on "virtual" loans, which ran into billions of dollars. The Ongar "loan" was for €60m. Jones paid more than $4m in fees.

The circular scheme worked this way: a single-purpose Delaware company like Ongar entered into an agreement with Deutsche Bank, which provided a 30-year Euro loan facility. The size of the loan was determined by the tax loss required by the would-be non-taxpayer. Interest was annual but repayment only at the end of the term. The company then used 80 to 85 percent of the loan to acquire deposits in Euros at Deutsche Bank as security for the loan. The balance was used by the company to acquire other bank obligations from Deutsche Bank to provide further security to the bank and make payments on the loan. The taxpayer bought this security for the 15 to 20 percent balance of the loan, but also assumed responsibility for repayment of the entire loan. The assets represented by the balance of the loan bought by the taxpayer were then sold at cost to Deutsche Bank. In reality there was no credit available to the taxpayer. The money in effect never left the bank. There was no risk to the taxpayer. But because of the notional liability to repay the full loan, the taxpayer still claimed almost the entire loan as a capital loss to offset capital gains. This is described as an "elaborate sham" in the Jones complaint.

Jones sued in 2004 after he had settled with the IRS at a cost of almost $9m in back taxes. He claimed damages of $25m, tripled by suing under the RICO racketeering statute. He also alleged fraud against Deutsche Bank, Sherry, Sylvester and others involved in selling him the CARDS scheme.

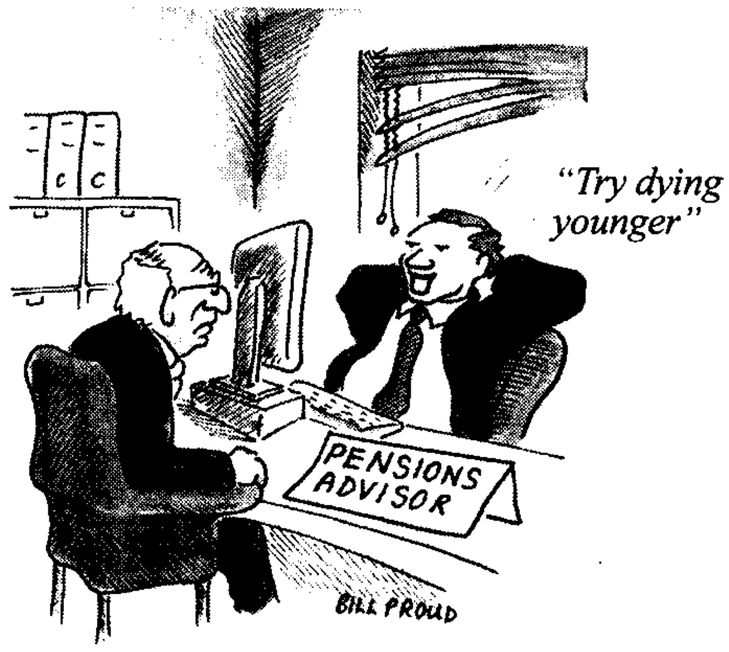
The complaint states: "Deutsche Bank, Mio Sylvester and Michael Sherry were all integral players in the defendants' fraudulent scheme and helped facilitate the CARDS facility."

According to court documents, lawyers acting for Jones served Sherry in person with the proceedings in London and endeavoured to serve Sylvester before eventually resorting to service by post. Sherry initially hired an American lawyer to represent him in 2005 and asked for time to respond, but then did not participate in the case. Sylvester did not respond at all. In November 2005, the court held both to be in default.

Last year Jones applied for judgment against both absent defendants. In September, Federal Judge James Ware held that as both had made "no showing of excusable neglect" and had "failed to participate in the litigation of this case", therefore "a default judgment is appropriate". Ware made a joint and several judgment for $75,162,312 plus interest.

Jones's San Francisco lawyer William M. Lukens confirmed that no move had been made yet to collect the judgment, which would need to be enforced by a British court in a new action, and there could be procedural and jurisdictional problems. One reason for the delay is that the main case against Deutsche Bank is stayed pending an appeal over whether the dispute should go to arbitration. A decision is expected next year. Any claim against Sherry and Sylvester would be reduced by any payments made by Deutsche Bank and the American defendants.

Deutsche Bank was a major player in the US tax shelter business, providing finance for schemes with colourful acronyms like BOSS, Son of BOSS, BLIPS, FLIPS, HOMER (as in Simpson) and COBRA. All were subsequently held by the IRS to be abusive tax shelters largely because they were only intended to produce losses. A US Senate committee which investigated these schemes said in a 2005 report that the bank had made $44m in fees from BLIPS alone in 1999.



The German bank has denied any wrongdoing but this year settled a case involving a different tax shelter to CARDS. Deutsche Bank remains under investigation by the Justice Department for its role in financing tax shelters sold by accountants KPMG. Last year the bank provided almost $300m to cover the problem.

Another German bank, HVB, has already cut a deal with US prosecutors and paid a $30m fine. HVB accepted that CARDS included "fraudulent and illegal elements" and that "all parties involved" knew the loan facility was not a legitimate long-term loan and would be unwound after a year or so to generate "phony tax benefits".

KPMG avoided prosecution by paying $456m in 2005. However, several of its former tax partners still face a criminal trial along with the US lawyer who provided the legal opinion claiming that CARDS worked.

Michael Sherry told the *Eye*: "The claim is entirely without merit, and I am being advised by independent legal counsel. In the circumstances it is not appropriate for me to comment substantively."

For Mio Sylvester, motoringlawyers.com said: "The matter is *sub judice* and therefore he is unable to make any comment at this time."

THE Serious Farce Office is in the early stages of a long, possibly three-year march at a cost of many millions to bring to justice British companies who paid bribes to obtain business from Saddam Hussein in Iraq – culprits already identified by a United Nations investigation – under the corrupt oil-for-food programme.

However, predictably the Americans are already notching up convictions. Last week saw Textron do a plea bargain with the Justice Department and the Securities & Exchange Commission and pay a total of $4.65m in fines and disgorgement of profits over the activities of its French companies. The El Paso oil company has already paid an even bigger fine to avoid prosecution.

Some of the prosecutors involved in the Iraq investigation are also working the BAE/Saudi bribes case abandoned by the SFO. Observers in Washington suspect that BAE may, like Textron and El Paso, eventually see the benefit of paying a fine to close down the US investigation and protect the vital American market.

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG

Number crunchings

60% ■ Number of GCSEs passed with at least a C grade

■ Number of school-leavers British businesses say are inadequately prepared for work

☛ *See over...*

Subprime made simple

THE success of subprime loans depended on the way they were packaged and sold. Investors were offered financial derivatives such as "collateral debt obligations" (CDO) – clever products offering higher than market interest rates secured on property. What could be better than that? Especially to banks, hedge funds and institutional investors looking to boost income. By 2006, the CDO market was worth $500bn a year.

But like the wartime tin of sardines that was for buying and selling but never opening, these complex structured financial derivatives were never seen for what they really were – until it was too late – by those who were paid for their investment expertise and bought them.

One of the reasons is that these were "black boxes" which many of those buying did not understand. Financial derivatives have reached such a degree of complexity that only the architects probably really know how they work. Everyone else just looks at the return – which is why banks in the US, Australia, France and Germany have suddenly discovered massive problems the directors did not know they had.

While the complexity of derivatives and the ignorance of those who invest in them is new, the main driver of the subprime market is old: greed. In all the handwringing of recent weeks, little or nothing has been said about what really explains the subprime scandal – which although so far a US problem, will soon be felt here.

Subprime mortgages have their origins here as well as in the US among predatory lenders bottom-fishing for borrowers who cannot really afford to borrow and/or should not be loaned more but have homes as security. This is a highly profitable business for all involved.

Borrowers are enticed by brokers who are on big commissions to make loans. So they are happy to connive with the borrower, who is desperate for the loan and will say anything about their income to get it. For the lenders, too, there are fat fees and juicy interest charges. So they have no reason to turn away anyone who is still breathing – if they own their home. Many of those working for the lenders are on commission-related pay.

The lenders look to unload the risk, either to bigger banks by selling on the loans, or both look to Wall Street and City investment banks to package this toxic time-bomb into a format that will make it look anything but high risk, and attractive to investors around the world seeking better than average income. Just imagine the fees and bonuses to be made on selling the $50bn to $500bn-a-year of these CDO packages, every year from 2000 to 2005. And then, finally, look at the management fees charged by the managers who bought this good thing to their fund holders.

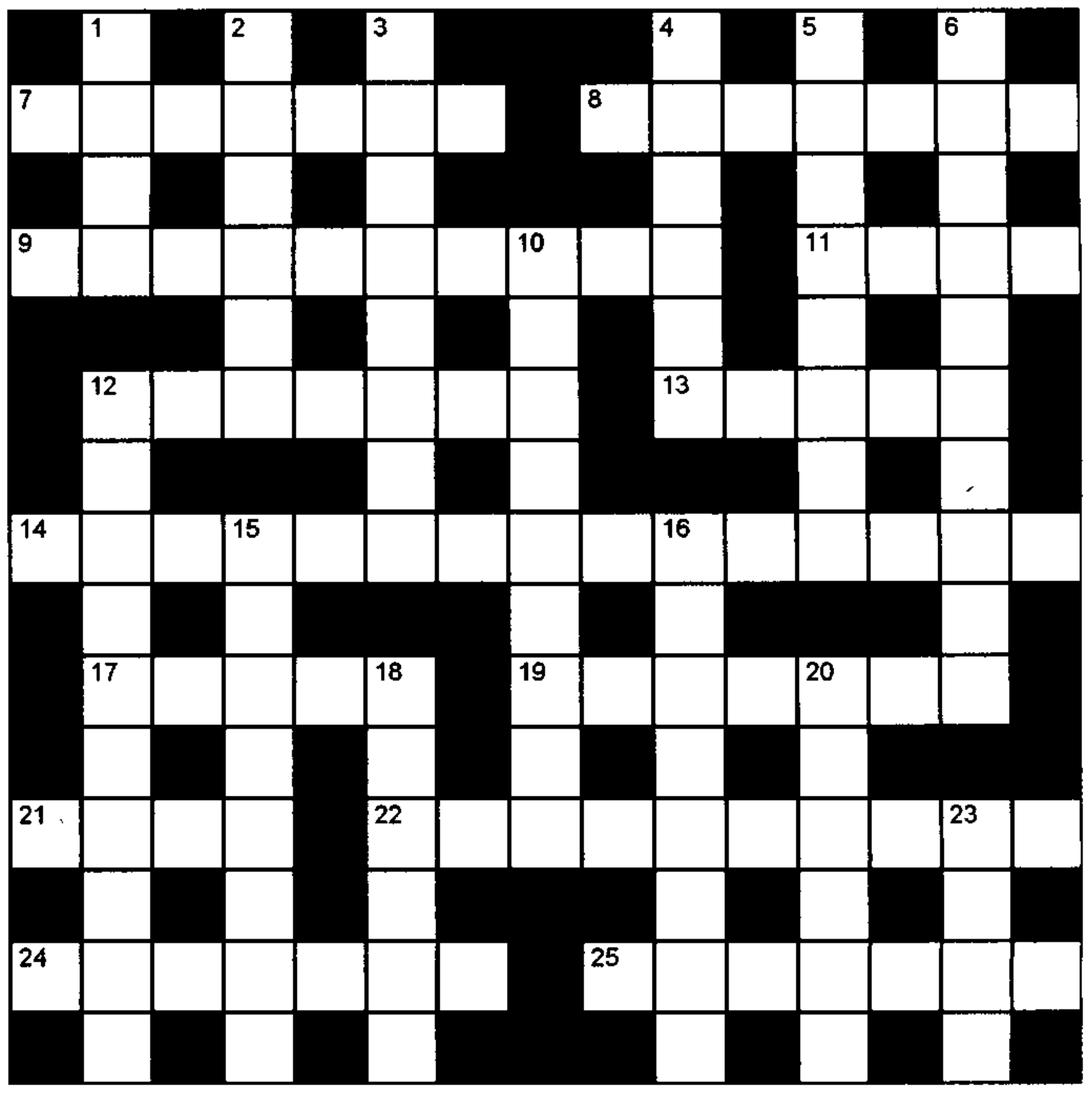
At no time was there any incentive for anyone from the poor homeowner with bad credit to the hedge-fund manager with the Lamborghini lifestyle to say – "but what if the borrowers can't pay?" Because if they had, the whole edifice would have collapsed – as it did when rising US interest rates tipped thousands of subprime borrowers into foreclosure. But by then, brokers, lenders, bankers and managers had all made a fortune.

The inbuilt problem with this business model was there for regulators in the US and Britain to see. But, as in the US, the Fundamentally Supine Authority did nothing until it was too late. The full cost of this global wilful blindness is likely to be felt well into next year in bank and fund failures, higher mortgage rates and more repossessions. But by then, the same clever people who brought the world collateral debt obligations will have come up with a new winner, and the lemmings will be there again with their bank accounts full of OPM – Other Peoples' Money.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 347

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 7 September 2007

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

7 Nixon adviser's gobbling Cyclops – makes one humble (7)

8 Get more of what you own and get stuffed (2,5)

9 Not conforming to the usual beefy type after round with hot bananas (10)

11 See 1 Down

12 Rod we pervertedly shoved inside pioneer? (7)

13 Char's vice, say, is arse over tip (5)

14/22 Gordon's aim after years of Blair's spin? Filibustering concern – coped badly (9,6,10)

17 Dim, useless leaders, politicians – shits (5)

19 *Tumbledown* run-in is farcical (2,5)

21 See 2dn.

22 See 14ac.

24 A reaction to too much booze, with inside of penis turning green initially? (7)

25 Nimbleness shown by Cyclops, inflamed when collared by gay movement (7)

DOWN

1/11 Nightfall conceals near pissed Secretary of State (4,4)

2/21 "President's no leader of West" (a predecessor) (6,4)

3 "Tone", hair restyled, making a broadcast (2,3,3)

4 One pisses receives kiss and climaxes (6)

5 Turn it to enter and screw Oz jumper on date, upside down (8)

6 Diners and accommodation for tits on e.g. *Eastenders* (10)

10 What's the purpose of Guantanamo Bay? Maintaining no right but death initially (9)

12 Wham bam, thank you, ma'am-type shags being a deterrent to boy racers? (5,5)

15 Axe keen Bush supporter after getting atom-bombed (8)

16 Jug for those who like their oats? (8)

18 Agree with what Brown was to Blair for so long? (6)

20 They don't come any better, ladies, with vibration (6)

23 Most attractive, pointless twat on earth (4)

Crossword 346 winner: STEWART TEMPLETON

ACROSS: 1/20 Creaming ones jeans 10 Beer mat 11 Chelsea 12 Last straw 13 Scrub 14 Surge 15 Orgasmic 18 Reef knot 23/9 Prick teaser 25 The Guards 27 Le Havre 28 Penises 29 Bit on the side.

DOWN: 2 Rump steak 3 Artery 4 Inchworm 5 Guess 6 Nostrum 7 Starbucks 8 Abel 14 Strip club 16 Adjourned 17 Fortieth 19 Epithet 21 Arrest 22 Herpes 24 Kevin 26 So-so.

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QC2 headphones (left). QC3 headphones (right).

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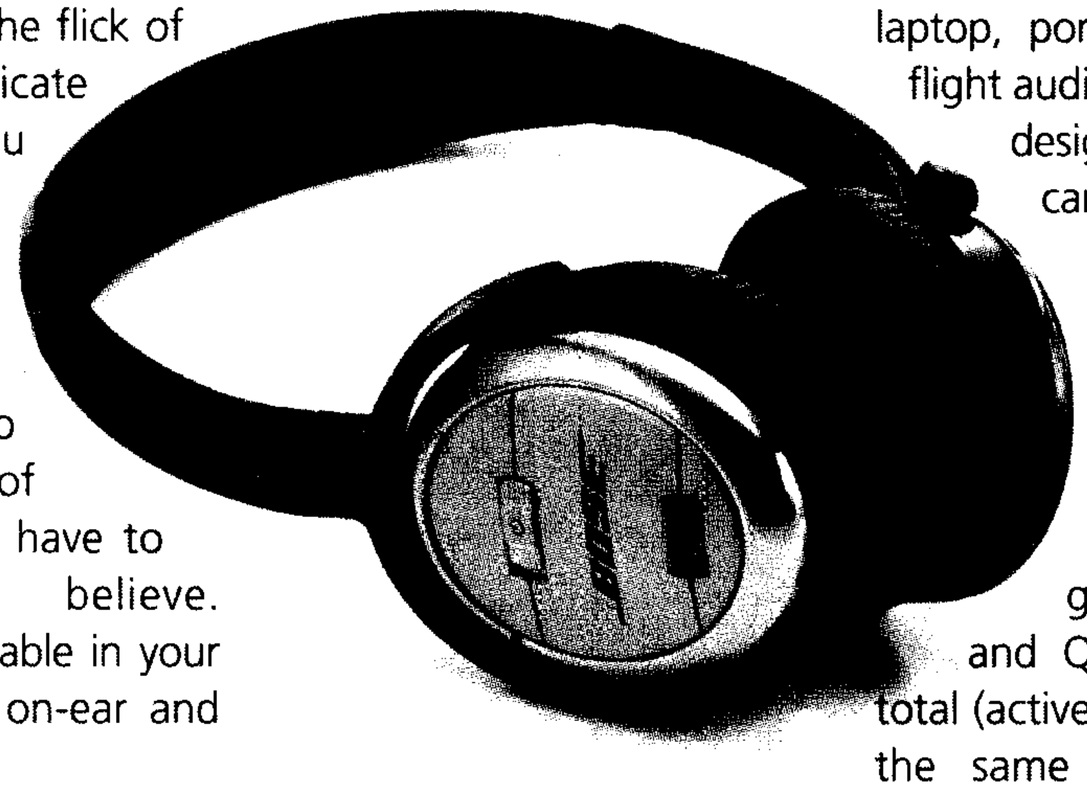
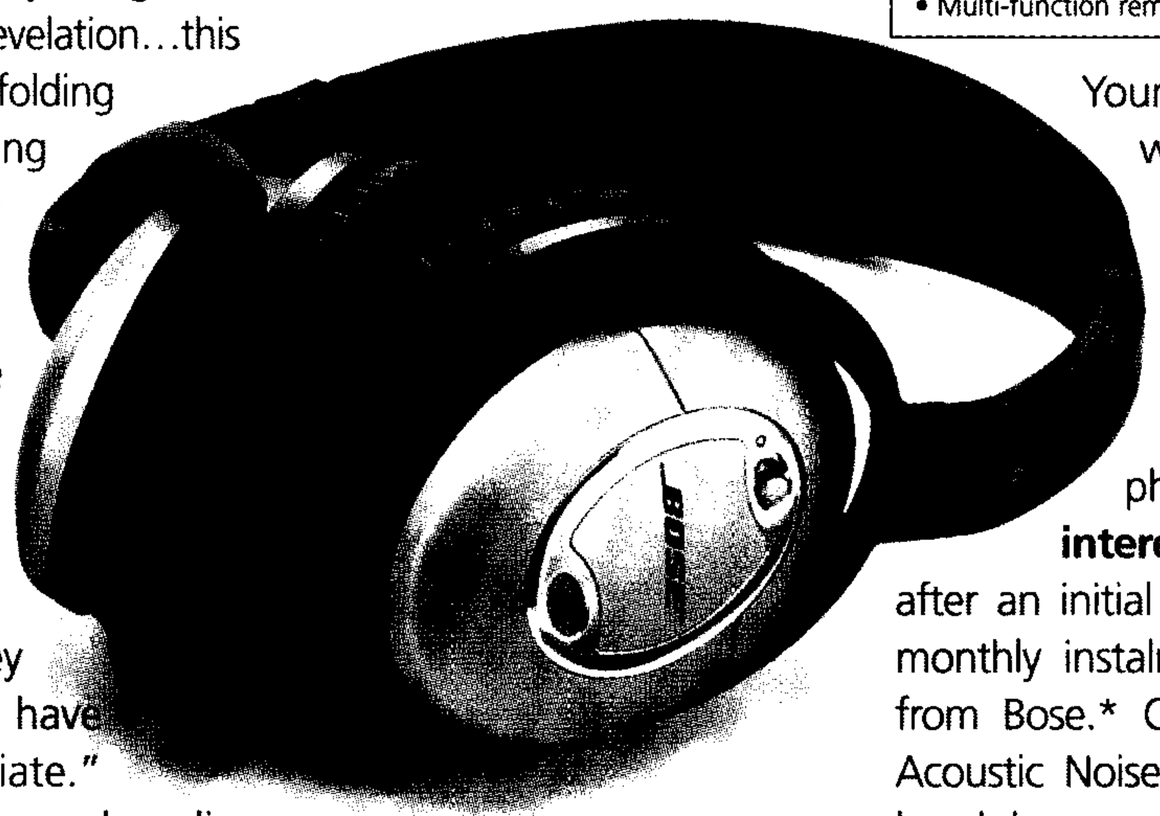


Bose around-ear QC™2 headphones



If you prefer an around-ear design, the QC2 headphones are equally comfortable. Simply turn them on to enjoy peace and tranquility. To add Bose quality sound, attach the audio cord and connect them to a home stereo, laptop, portable CD/DVD/MP3 player or in-flight audio system. They also offer a fold-flat design for easy storage in the slim carrying case.

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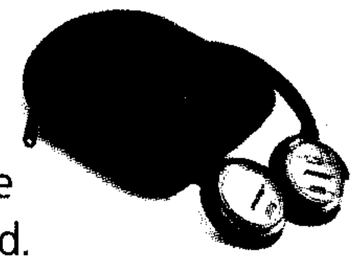

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OM SAI RAM

A fitting end to the ill-fitting British suit

A suitable man to spark a men's clothing revolution

Consider this proposition. Would you rather pay the same sum for a single, off-the-peg, chain store suit cut by a computer and sold to you by a spotty boy who thinks side vents are to be found on a Lambretta scooter, or for two bespoke, custom cut, hand-stitched suits, measured and sold to you by a man for whom suits are a lifetime's passion?

The British clothing chain store has a lot to fear from ***Mr. Raja M Daswani*** of Kowloon. If there were a global ambassador for men's suiting, Mr Daswani, who owns and runs Hong Kong's biggest tailoring business, would be that man. He and his family team measure and make hundreds of suits a week for discerning clients across the world.

Indeed, so successful is ***Mr. Daswani***, that - a little unnervingly as he is measuring you up - he freely admits he doesn't really need to work any more: 'My team is as experienced as I am. But I just love men's suits and I wouldn't feel right sitting at home. It's not a business. It's a mission.

'I love seeing customers walk in a really bad suit that cost them a fortune and walk out in one of our suits that's perfect in every way, made with a good heart in a superior fabric for a half or a quarter as much.'

The price of a Daswani shirt and suit are astonishing. We are talking from £19 (£25 including tax and duty) for a custom shirt and £129 (£169 including tax and duty) for a fully lined, made-to measure suit in a lightweight wool or linen, to £250 (£325 including tax and duty) for a 100 per cent wool, entirely hand finished suit in a British cloth, with every refinement from handmade button holes to knee lining. Even the most expensive suit, made in deluxe superfine wool for £1,500 (£1,950 including tax and duty), costs a third less than it would on **Savile Row**.

Raja Daswani may be based in Hong Kong, but his sartorial mission to the badly dressed and overpaying British customer brings him to the UK as often as once a month. He and his team take over hotel suites in major cities, so British customers can make an appointment and get the full Kowloon Monty.

Measurements and digital photos are taken here and emailed to Hong Kong. Often, your suit will be started on by a tailor 6,000 miles away before you've even left the hotel. You can have it couriered within a week or so, or wait for a second fitting when the Raja team hits your town again a few weeks later.

It now remains to see whether the Raja revolution, with its inspired mix of artistic flair, entrepreneurial genius and digital technology, will see the end of the off-the-peg British chain store suit. On price alone, it's a sartorial solution that will even please the Suits in accounts.

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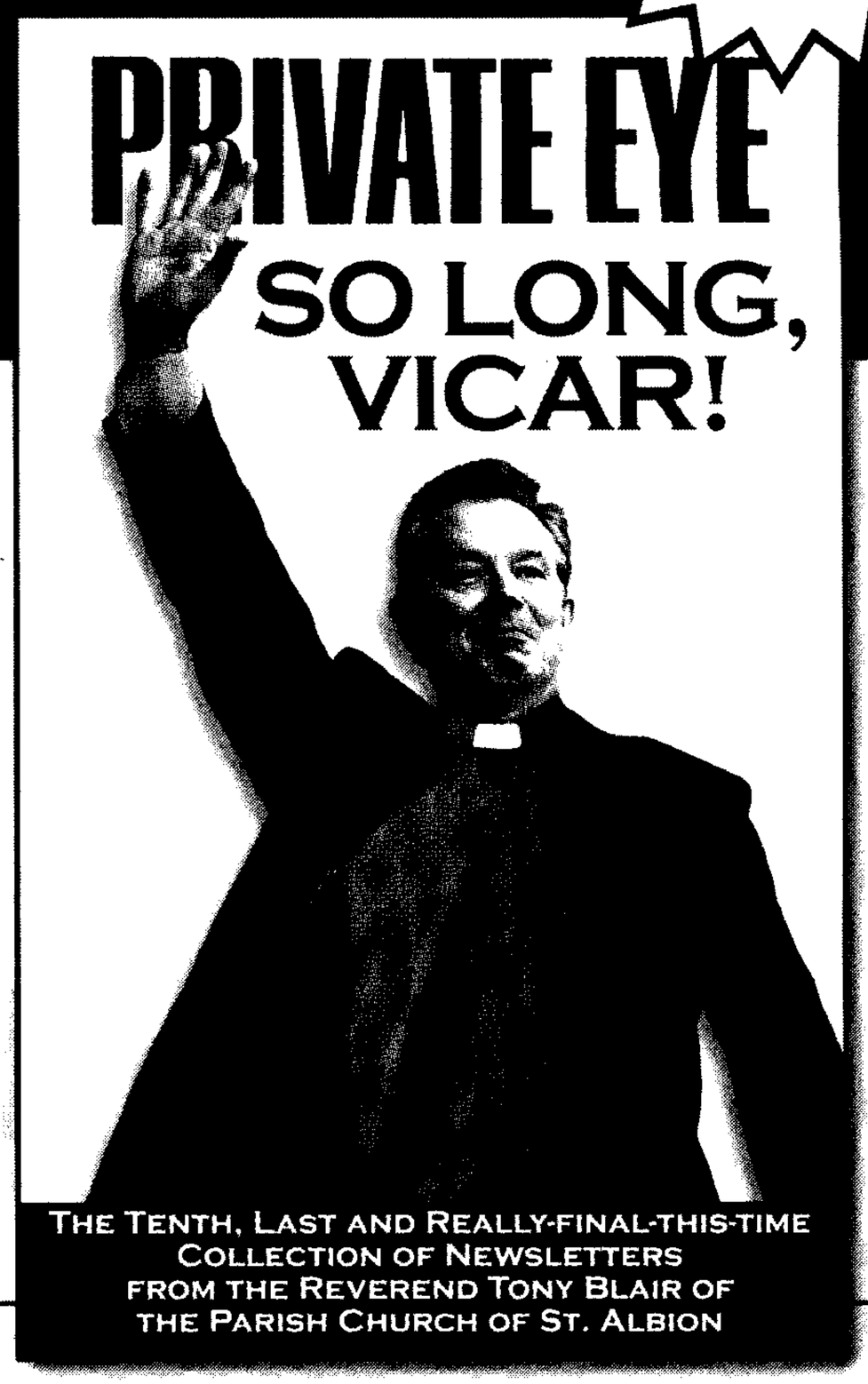
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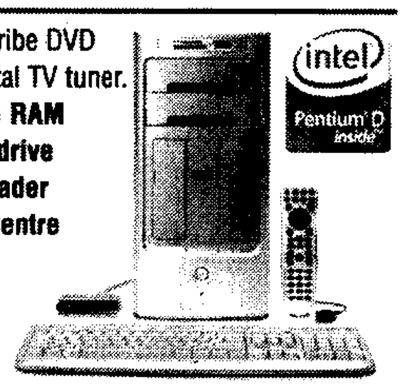

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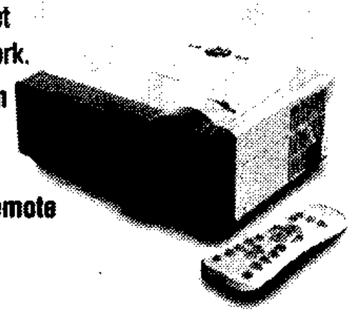

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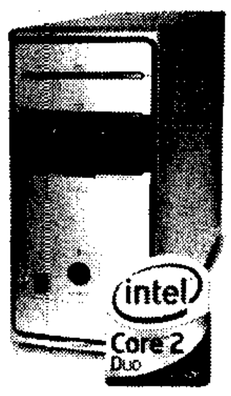

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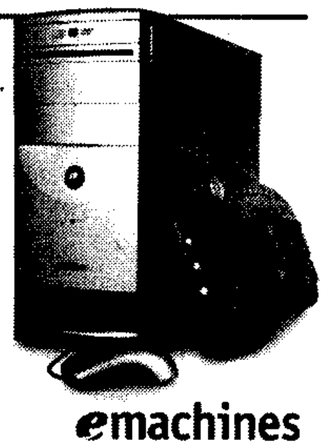

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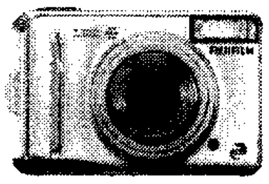

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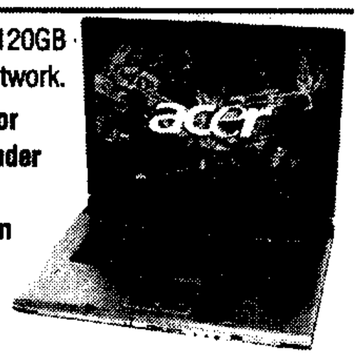

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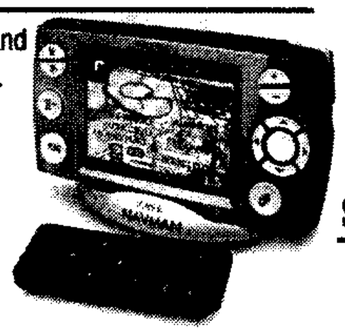

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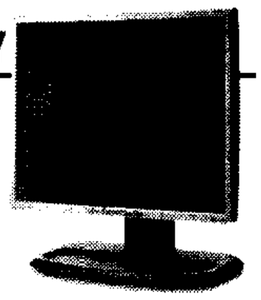

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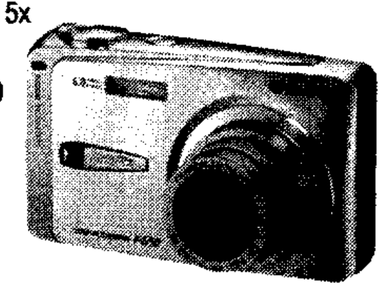

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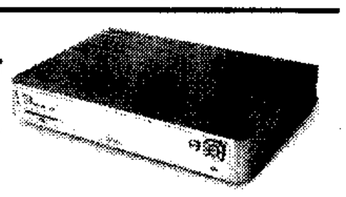

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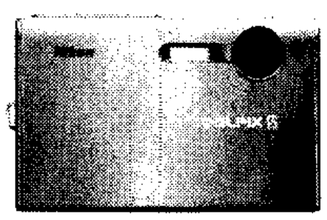

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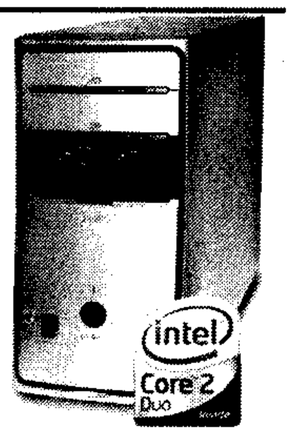

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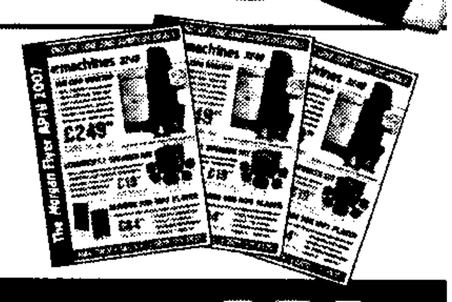

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NOTTINGHAM HISTORY STUDENT. Studious, non-partying female seeks clean, quiet, safe, affordable local accommodation. Reply Box 214035.

DESPERATE TO MOVE OUT of my parents' house (I'm 29!). Any help to secure deposit much appreciated. S/C: 30-96-06. A/C: 21874960.

THROW ME A LIFELINE PLEASE! Single mum with two jobs – can't pay for child care. Please help me and my three year old. Co-Op Bank, S/C: 08-92-49. A/C: 02308331. Thank you.

GENUINE PEOPLE NEED FUNDS to start artistic / spiritual retreat. S/C: 08-92-87. A/C: 88275048. kaizenspain@gmail.com

STRUGGLING FEMALE ARTIST with teenage daughter (both of us have Aspergers Syndrome) needs to be able to rent a space to work. S/C: 11-08-16. A/C: 00999919. Tel: 07783 802260.

NHS WORKER for 20 years now urgently needing a joint replacement herself. Please help. S/C: 72-50-04. A/C: 41884385.

HELP FUND MA Chinese at SOAS: Liberty UP, Censorship DOWN! S/C: 40-38-10. A/C: 01336037.

SUPPORTED MYSELF through university = large debt. Worried. Please help. S/C: 11-02-76 A/C: 08166159.

NHS RHINOPLASTY BID unsuccessful. Please help fund private. Many thanks. S/C: 60-21-40. A/C: 24357421.

EYE NEED A LIFELINE. S/C: 30-10-27. A/C: 7658057.

IN TOO DEEP – please throw me a lifeline. S/C: 08-92-88. A/C: 03034002.

TALENTED, DEDICATED JUGGLER (18) really needs help to fund intensive training year in Berlin with world's best. S/C: 08-92-99. A/C: 65253494. Email: 01749677316@talktalk.net

YOUNG ACTOR/WRITER seeks £3000 to fulfil promise. Thank you. S/C: 40-35-04. A/C: 12135825.

I NEED TO STUDY A PA COURSE – in serious debt but not deterred by it, can you help please? tshelps@yahoo.co.uk

DISABLED WOMAN, large Council Tax debt. Thanks. Email: m.b.f@hotmail.co.uk

HELP ME BE REGGIE PERRIN. Accidental desk dullard workaholic needs year to write Booker winner. I didn't get where you are today without giving it a shot even if it's grot. Huge debts prevent escape. Help? Super!! S/C: 13-40-00. A/C: 00000000. Ref: 306CA212848C.

EX WIFE screwing me over: desperate to see daughter. Feel hopeless. Help towards £5000 legal costs may restore faith in humanity. S/C: 60-06-20. A/C: 53590066.

EX-BOYFRIEND COPIED KEYS and stole cash savings. Please help. S/C: 30-98-34. A/C: 07100237.

GENUINE AND CONSCIENTIOUS person made a big business mistake: on the brink of losing life's work. Desperately need £145,000. Please help. All donations welcome. S/C: 11-00-73. A/C: 01962898.

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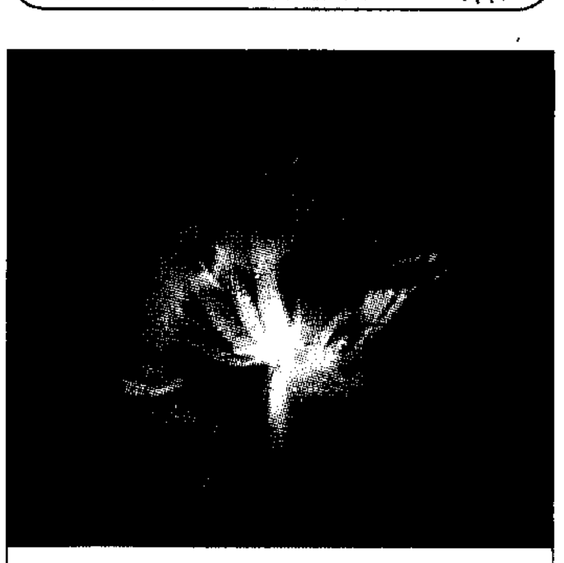
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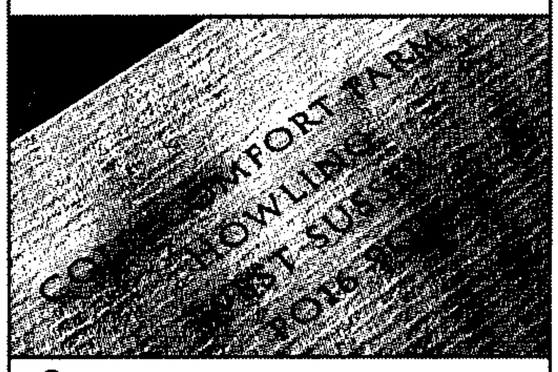

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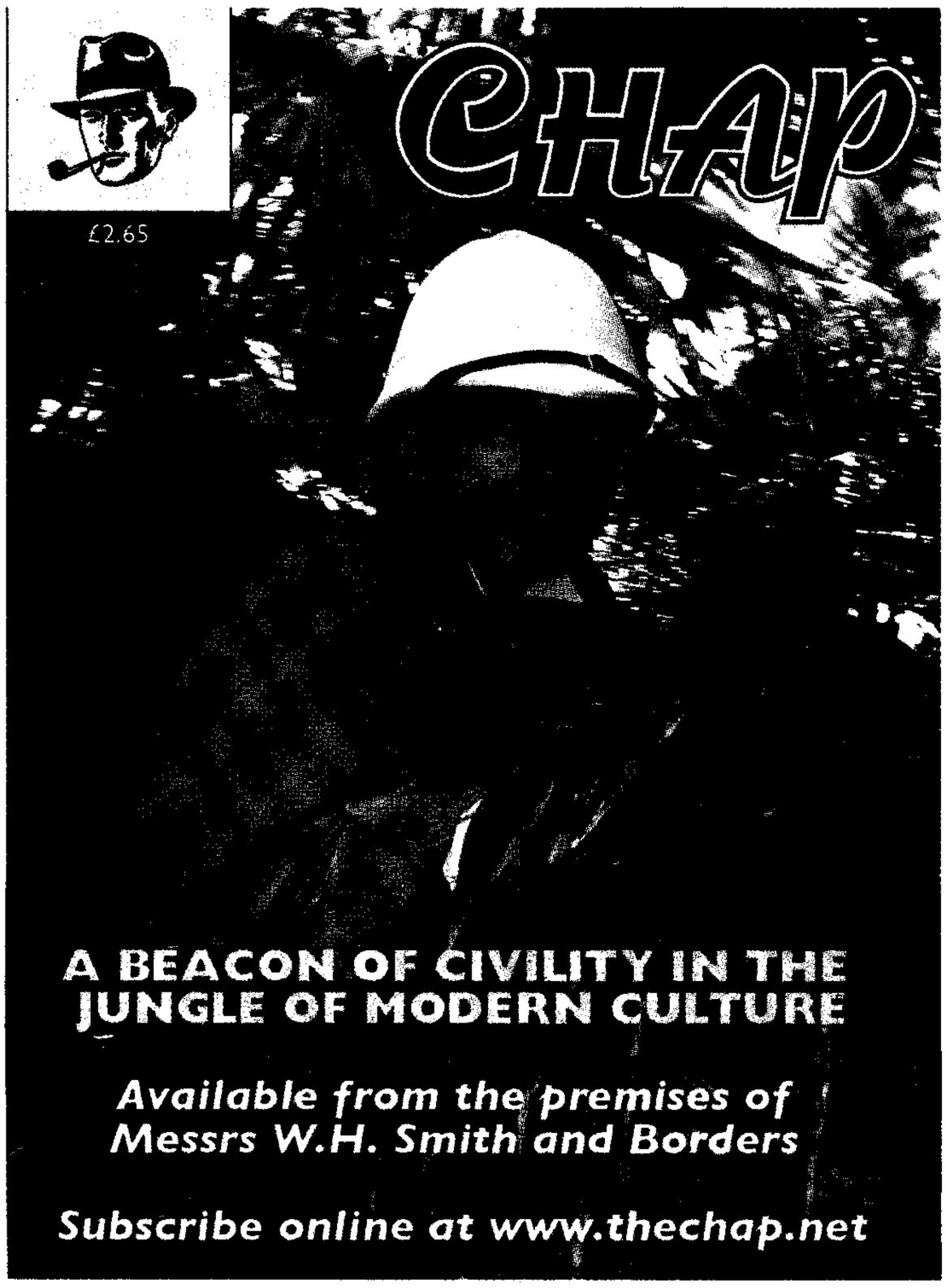
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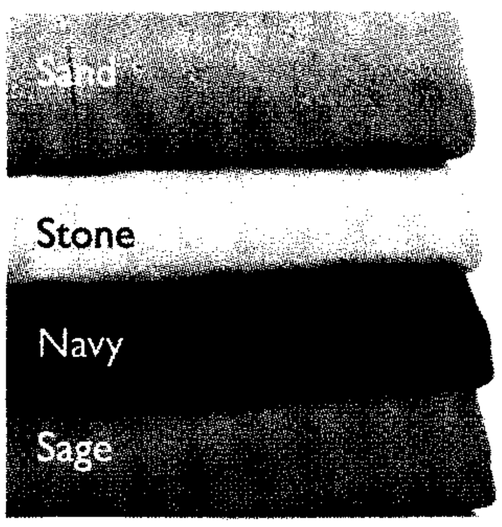

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